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THE ROMAN CATACOMBS.



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THE ROMAN CATACOMBS.

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JOANNES ROUSE,

Censor deputatus.

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THE ROMAN CATACOMBS.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR THE TEACHING OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH.

PART II.

THE CATACOMBS AND THE SACRAMENTS OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY
DOM MAURUS WOLTER,

BENEDICTINE PRIOR OF ST. MARTIN'S ABBEY, BEURON, GERMANY.

TRANSLATED (WITH SPECIAL PERMISSION)

BY
H. S. BUTTERFIELD.



"The bodies of the Saints are buried in peace, and their names shall live for evermore, Alleluia. * * * In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, but they are in peace, Alleluia."

LONDON:
THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON;
DUBLIN; AND DERBY.
MDCCCLXVII.

110. k. 404

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DEDICATION
TO THE
VERY REV. AUTHOR, PRIOR OF BEURON.

Very Rev. and dear F. Prior,

Many years ago, when you were on a visit, in the good old town of Bonn, to your happy home, then mine too, I was awakened early one sunny morning by a disturbance through the house—the opening of doors, the sound of many footsteps, and then—a sudden hush. Next came a low murmur from the bed-chamber adjoining mine. Boy-like, I sprang from my bed to listen at the door, and so heard these words: “*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi.*” “The Body of our Lord !”

* * * * *

I crept back to my bed musing, for I knew that on the couch of that room there lay a pallid, wasted form, with joined hands, amidst a silent kneeling group, about to receive her honoured Guest, borne by you, His servant.

Not many months had passed and that same

poor face, now yet more wan, had settled very gently, but for ever, into a placid smile, and the innocent spirit, freed at last from its sorely-pained body, had sped fluttering to the happy Vision of Him whom she had possessed, unseen, in this valley of tears.

Yet a little longer, when but one summer had departed, and autumn was come to tinge with its picturesque yellow the surrounding foliage, and I found myself kneeling at the altar-rails of a little gothic church, bearing Mary's sweet name, in the "Garden of England," once more listening to those words, "*Corpus Domini nostri*," but this time, happy in the acquisition of truth, myself about to receive its Eternal Fount.

It is then not as a stranger that, after a lapse of years, I am addressing you. Your noble work in the "Vaterland," specially blessed as it is by our Holy Father, has a very peculiar interest for Englishmen of the old Faith, to which it is my happiness also to cling. Your newly-restored abbey, again resounding day by day with the melody of the Divine Office, and singularly blessed by the possession of a miraculous image of our common Mother, is no strange nor uninteresting spot to us, for the very name of the Order to which it belongs

carries one's thoughts back to the golden time when this fair land boasted of many such. The history of that venerable Order here, as elsewhere, its noble seats of learning and beauteous churches, its erudition and piety would fill, not pages, but volumes.

Throughout Christendom it has reared for itself, aided by God and St. Benedict, "blessed" as to name and deeds,

"Monumentum ære perennius,
Regalique situ pyramidum altius ;
Quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens
Possit diruere, aut innumerabilis
Annorum series, et fuga temporum."

Horace.

We too are no longer deprived of its peaceful presence among us, for long ago it began a new life in an old home. It is a remarkable fact, which you, dear F. Prior, and your good monks have aided to confirm, that Religious have a happy knack of returning to, or at least near, their ancient abodes. Now this thought is very refreshing in a boasting age that sneers at everything, save, of course, its own foolishness; and it oftentimes recalls to my mind a touching fact, especially as day after day I pass by what was whilom a famous Benedictine Abbey, listening to its bells chiming—not for holy Mass nor solemn Vespers—but for what to

its old tenants, and to you and (Deo Gratias) to me, were a sorry substitute. In your holy Order (pardon my reminding you) there has ever existed an abbot of that vast fane, the representative of those whose pleasure it was to make it all fair and lovely for their Heavenly King, but who are now reposing in peace—a peace that knows no regretful thought of the past, but is itself that joy “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor man’s heart conceived.”

Methinks I see such a one on some bright summer’s day, half hidden in the solemn procession which is slowly winding round the shady cloisters of that abbey, up the steps, under the arch, dipping at last into the cool nave, ever onwards, two and two, to the High Altar, gleaming with the brightness of many tapers amidst tender love tokens—gay English flowers, again in their old place by Jesus’ side. How the organ peals! and how clear and shrill are the voices of the choristers, as the words echo in the vaulted roof, “*Credo in unam sanctam Catholicam et Apostolicam Ecclesiam!*” * * * * * Hush! a great silence—silvery bells—and He for whom all these earthly delights are combined is here—with us. “*Corpus Domini nostri!*”

We may spend many happy moments in the past, and in the present too, when angels are softly whispering round us, "Fear not, little flock," so inspiring us with hope for a future, made glorious by reason of a new victory.

In token, then, of my veneration for you, dear F. Prior, and of sympathy with all that concerns your abbey, which ere long, I trust, will be better known to us, I have now come to dedicate to you my poor translation of your little work.

And still, feebly reproducing as it does, your own earnest words, I have oftentimes, during the peaceful hours spent with you in it, dared to think of a consolation to you and to me for its defects; and it is this, that in virtue of association, however humble, with your own work, it yet may not be accounted unworthy of a little share in that loving benison granted to you from the large heart of the Universal Father, which this many a year has encircled you as with a halo.

Believe me,

Dear F. Prior,

Your affectionate friend and servant,

H. S. BUTTERFIELD.

15th August, 1867.

PREFACE.

A few words on the origin and scope of the following pages will not be misplaced. There exists at Frankfort-on-Mayne a Society founded for the publication of Catholic Pamphlets, and which has already amongst its contributors the Bishop of Mayence and other learned ecclesiastics and laymen. The Pamphlets on the Catacombs were published by the Committee of that Society last year, and owing to their success in Germany it was proposed to present them in English garb to the English-speaking public. The subject is, of course, not new to many readers, but there are thousands, who on account of the size and expense of the works hitherto published, have never had the advantage of learning many interesting, and in fact, highly important particulars of the faith and practice of the primitive Church, as we are happily enabled to know them from the most

sure sources, very plain to all, the Catacombs of Rome.

If the knowledge of these discoveries is limited to a few amongst ourselves, what about those who are not "of us?" To them, for the most part, the signs and symbols of those wonderful places are as much "Arcana" as they were to the heathens. The writer of these pages had occasion to show the verses occurring in them about the "Fish" to an exceedingly clever and well-educated gentleman, an Anglican, a Hebrew, Greek, and Latin scholar, well-read into the bargain, and he could not comprehend at all the meaning of the hieroglyphic!

There seems then to be a want, which it is hoped the following little work will supply, giving, as it does, the *latest* discoveries, a fact, important in itself. Dom Wolter is well known in Germany as the restorer of the Benedictine Order in that country, and his name is mentioned by the authoress of the "Life and Revelations of St. Gertrude," in gratitude for his learned assistance in that work, so that he is not altogether a stranger to us. Feebly as the translation gives the words of the author, it is yet hoped that its general style, brevity,

simplicity, and comprehensive arrangement will be found acceptable.

The Catholic heart ever yearns towards the "Eternal City," and from what we see and hear around us, we know full well how her name, even, influences the great world of unbelief, scornful of it though it affects to be.

So, dear reader, on this bright August day, when the joy-bells of Christendom are pealing, and sweet chants from faithful children are rising to the Assumed Queen's Throne, we invite you to this wondrous City, lovingly offering you our hand to guide you to her tombs, be you friend or foe !

Feast of the Assumption, 1867.

PART I.

THE ROMAN CATACOMBS,

AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR THE TEACHING

OF THE

CATHOLIC CHURCH.

SED . TV . QVI . LEGIS . ORA . PRO . ME .
ET . (H)ABEAS . DOMINVM PROTECTOREM .
(Catacomb of Pontianus.)

Two cities there are, which above all others not only possess an incomparable charm for the Christian heart, but also throw before the inquiring mind a light on the paths of theological and historical knowledge,— Jerusalem and Rome. Like two bright eyes they glitter on the face of the earth, reflecting heaven; they are the chosen Sanctuaries of mankind, the poles of the world's history, the mysterious spots where the Divine favour has set its lever, in order to lift the earth out of its course and place it in a new spiritual orbit. They are the cities of the Covenant, the scenes of God's great deeds. One proclaims the history of the Redemption, the other the history of the Church or of the redeemed. As mother and daughter they are inseparably tied to one another. Their physiognomy and history, indeed, bear the stamp of this relationship. Jerusalem's ever memorable hill saw the most holy sacrifice of the God-man, and was by His blood con-

secrated as the Altar of the Redemption:—the hills of Rome beheld the martyr's death of thousands of noble members of Christ, and the streams of blood which they drank consecrated them as the High Altar of the Church. The sacred Body of our Lord was, after the completed Sacrifice, lowered into the rocky grave at Golgotha's foot; the bodies of the holy Martyrs were laid to rest at the feet of the City of the Seven Hills, in the caverns of the Catacombs. Three days our Lord's Body rested in the still tomb, and rose on the third day; so the Roman Church, Christ's mystical Body, hid herself three centuries in the quiet subterraneous city of the dead, and then rose from it to wave the Easter banner of the Cross over the whole world. Lastly, after the resurrection, both grave-places have remained gloriously blessed. The unsealed hollow in the rock at Jerusalem, the empty grave with the winding-sheet have become for all time a testament and witness for the great mystery of the Redemption; Rome's re-opened Catacombs, with the treasures of their holy remains and monuments, are an irrefutable witness for the primitive Church, and a rich legacy to latest generations. They are in a manner ancient Christian archives, starting points in the history

of the Church ; in halls and chambers, on walls and vaults they unroll in colours, fresh as life, a touching picture of the belief and love of the Apostolic Church. We will try, aided by the studies of many years, in part made with the valuable assistance of the learned Chevalier de Rossi, the most thorough connoisseur of the Catacombs, to conduct the reader, as far as the limits of two pamphlets will allow, into subterranean Rome, and to point out, that as the Church for centuries has minted the gold of costly relics out of its rocky veins for the altars of the world, so also Christian research has won from its holy mines costly jewels for perfecting the edifice of the knowledge of the Faith.

I.—*Importance of the Catacombs.*

What are the Catacombs ? and for what did they serve ? These preliminary questions demand a short reply. Transport yourself, dear reader, to Rome, in the days of her earlier glory, say in the second or third century of Christian chronology. There lies the proud Mistress of the world with her one-and-a-half million of mostly heathen inhabitants ! The sun pours down its burning rays from the azure sky, and colours with its gold a sea of pillared

temples and palaces, Basilicas and Mausoleums, theatres and pleasure-gardens. All the treasures of the world, all the productions of art are here, collected together as in a giant basin. Yet this abundance of gold and marble, this tremendous blinding pomp, is but glittering tinsel upon an immeasurable grave! Though Queen of the World, this City is the deeply-sunken, shamefully degraded slave of superstition and vice. The enemy of mankind has in a manner become incarnate, and is here enthroned upon an unassailable stronghold, surrounded by as many vassals as there are idols looking down from the temples and pinnacles of the Palaces. Rome, the centre of the political power of the world, has become the centre of moral corruption. From all countries it sucks in life, in order to send it throbbing back, converted into poison, to the very extremities of the globe. If mankind were to go to destruction, the Prince of the World could have chosen no more favourable place of operation for the work of ruin. If it were to be saved, the Eternal Compassion must also here commence the battle. And It did commence it. In the district of Rome, under the green shadows of the silent Compagna, hundreds of busy hands worked in the still tombs and dug in inextricable entangle-

ment the subterraneous passages. They were soldiers of Christ, who surrounded the heathen metropolis as with a girdle of fortifications. In these entrenched encampments they prepared and armed themselves for the strife ; from them they sallied forth with holy courage to the martyr's combat : and when the battle, the palm was won, then the corpses of the heroes were carried back as trophies to the Catacombs, and consigned to the grave with the insignia and instruments of their torture, as in olden times warriors were wont to be buried with their weapons. But the drops of their blood became the seed of an ever fresh Christian army, until the standard of the Cross, planted by the hand of the Emperor Constantine, victoriously waved on the battlements, and Rome became the beating heart of a new world, from which now flowed streams of faith and love into all the veins of mankind.

II.—*Their foundation.*

We have sketched a picture of the importance of the Catacombs in the world's history ; let us now give a description of the same. The subterranean church-yards of Rome, first called Catacombs in the sixteenth century, are

exclusively of Christian origin. They lie stretched out in a direction between the first and third milestones beyond the walls of Rome, an immense, silent, holy City of the Dead. Established in the landed property of noble Christian families, they enjoyed, particularly in the two first centuries, the protection of the Roman law, which declared "religious places" inviolable. To distinguish them more easily, the names of the Christian possessors or of the illustrious martyrs lying buried there were applied to them. They form, answering to the number of titles or parishes of Rome, 26, or with the addition of the smaller and post-Constantine, 40 unconnected nets of subterranean streets of graves, which, hewn regularly and perpendicularly out of a transportable volcanic stratum, *tufa granolare*, intersect each other in almost inextricable confusion, and generally run in as many as five stories one over the other. The passages or streets, called galleries, have along their walls on both sides, from the floor to the roof, horizontal incisions. These are the niches for graves, *loculi*, in which rest the Christian dead, often piled, like sleepers on board ship, fourteen one above the other, without distinction of rank, age, or sex. Every inch of the niche, every foot of wall, is economi-

cally made use of; but each, whether adult or child, has his own "new tomb, hewn out of the rock, wherein never yet had any man been laid." The galleries are so narrow, though of a height of between seven and fifteen feet, that a single person often fills up their width, whereas their length is so great, that if all the streets could be joined to one another, a distance of 1200 miles would have to be traversed and four to six million graves passed by. The business of excavating these halls of the dead, with all the graves and chapels, was cared for by a gild or brotherhood of genuine disciples of Tobias, called "Fossores," i. e. excavators, who were prepared for their self-sacrificing vocation by a kind of ecclesiastical consecration or benediction.

III.—*Their object.*

After this hasty description of the Catacombs let us discover their object. Their original destination already appears from the old Christian appellation "Cemetery," resting-place or church-yard. They served for the interment of departed Christians, whose bodies, as members of Christ, temples and vessels of God, their fellows would not expose either to destruction by

the customary burning, or to dishonour by the Pagans. They were rather buried as seed in a blessed field, hereafter gloriously to blossom ; or, according to the ancient Christians' current expression, “deposited,” as one consigns to a safe place a pledge for preservation. They were not, properly speaking, dead, but slumbering, the grave-place answering to a dormitory, where men rest from the day's work, until the day dawns, and the sound of the trumpet wakes them. Let us transport ourselves for a moment to such a place. A team laden with a barrel has just been driven into the dusky hall of an old sandpit (*arenaria*). It is the funeral car, a make-shift in the hard days of persecution. The Fossores in their proper dress are waiting for the new arrival, and with trembling hands lift down the corpse. It has not first, as sometimes was needful, long been hidden covered with lime ; fresh from the gory place of execution faithful watchers for the dead have lifted it up, and hasten to consign the costly booty to the treasure-chamber. A hoary Fosstor lights the bearers to a corner of the sand-pit, whence secret steps lead down into the Christian City of the Dead. Below, the covering on the champion is solemnly saluted by the Bishop

and faithful, and the funeral train puts itself in motion. Through the silent space softly murmurs the psalmody, like a song of the Blessed, and mysteriously resounds in the galleries. The lights in the hands of the pilgrims illuminate thousands and thousands of little stars on the red *tufa* walls, which brightly glimmer and then fade out again, whilst the graves, which are arranged in endless rows, form with their peaceful occupants a guard of honour for the newly-arrived fellow-citizen. The yellow seals and white marble slabs, which close the graves, gleam in the wavering light as were they "gold and silver plates sewn on red damask." And how animated they are! Like transparencies they light up, and many a touching inscription, many a tenderly conceived symbol, artlessly prepared by the Fosser's ready hand, announce heavenly peace, confidence, or glad expectation, forming a responsory to the choir of psalm-singers. But all around the tablets glitter in the mortar, as a wreath ornament, marks of loving remembrance. Here shines a coin, shell, or cameo, there a sparkling gem or glass vessel with golden ornamentation. Then the impressions of seals with Christian device, and in the form of the sole of the foot, close the light grave-stone, and where a martyr occupies

the silent tomb, there sparkles the most precious jewel, a glass, clay or onyx phial of costly martyrs' blood, not rarely lighted by a burning little light. Already the mournful procession has passed through many a gallery, and as often as it winds into a new one, a little lamp from a friendly niche in the wall greets it like a silent watcher, which, sometimes ornamented with an emblem, sometimes itself formed like a dove, fish, or barque, joyfully mingles its needy light with the rich brightness of the tapers. The resting-place is reached. This time it is not a simple tomb in one of the long streets of graves. For the martyr's distinction, the Fossors have prepared in a chamber of the rock an Arcolosium (monument), which from the ground upwards is worked out of the rock in the form of a sarcophagus, and overhung by a flat vaulted niche. The corpse is let down by the bearers. It is, according to the type of Jesus' Body "anointed with choice spices and wrapped in fine linen." A loving hand yet lays round the head a wreath of laurel leaves, as was customary to do to warriors, and the officiating high priest completes the benediction. Once more the sacred covering is loaded with kisses from devout lips, and committed to the tomb, a flask

of blood by the side, the testimony given for Christ, and an urn, which fills grave and chamber with its aromatic odour, emblem of spiritual incense. And lo, the tomb becomes at once the Holy Table, and the marble slab closing it the altar stone, on which the Bishop offers the Sacrifice of the New Covenant to the praise of the Most High, in honour of the beatified one now crowned in heaven !

The Catacombs, built in the first place as churchyards for the sleeping Christian brothers and sisters, received in the meanwhile from the circumstances of the times another destination. For, in the days of persecution they became for the Pope, clergy and certain laics particularly exposed to hatred, places of temporary sojourn, but for the faithful places of assembly for Divine Service. For the latter object the chambers, i.e. family and martyrs' tombs, were soon no longer sufficient. Well shaped, richly ornamented chapels were hollowed out in the rocks with an arcolosium or altar standing just over a sarcophagus. Near or behind this was the episcopal seat, and along the walls the stone bench for the clergy. Niches placed in the walls, or also projecting shelves, served as credence tables. The choir or men's chapel corresponded as a rule to that

of the women on the other side of the gallery, with the look-out thereon, and a passage (*luminare*) issuing from the roofs and uniting over the gallery carried the fresh air to both. Below was still a third unadorned space, in connection with the *Presbyterium* by an opening for the sound, in which the penitents and catechumens assembled. Now it was in these crypts that from Peter up to Marcellus and Eusebius a whole row of Popes dwelt, often for a long time—the holy Pope Caius, nephew of the cruel Diocletian, indeed, for fully eight years. Here they instructed and baptized the faithful, ordained priests and established ecclesiastical discipline. From hence they governed the whole flock of Christ, issued their *Pastorals* and exercised their high sacerdotal and apostolic office. They sent out hence the faithful, strengthened with the Bread of the Strong, to the battle-field of the martyr, and at length themselves strode forth to die for Christ. The sanctity of the graves and the fear of exposing themselves to danger in the unknown labyrinths, gave to the subterranean places of refuge security against the enemies of the Christian name. In spite of this, exceptional cases are told us in which this necropolis ceased to be an asylum. Thus, St. Emerentiana was stoned

in a crypt, St. Candida precipitated through a *luminare*, and another time a whole troop of Christians were buried alive on the tomb of the holy martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria. In like manner the holy Pope Sixtus II. in the year 261, whilst celebrating the mysteries, was slain together with four deacons, and shortly before another Pope had the same fate. It was St. Stephen I. By imperial command dragged to the Temple of Mars, he miraculously escapes the hands of the executioners and hides himself with the clergy in the catacomb of Callistus. Here he long peacefully performs the duties of his pastoral office in the midst of his flock herding round him. One evening,—it was after a sultry day in August—a holy assembly was again announced to the faithful. Whoever found himself exactly on the Appian Way before the city, could perceive from time to time, sometimes singly and sometimes in little groups, hurrying figures stealing through the darkness and vanishing behind the wall of a lonely country house. They are Christians who are hastening to the cemetery of Lucina, a ramification of the catacombs of Callistus, for the night office. At the recognised pass word a door opens, and silently they wander through the sparingly lighted subterraneous passages.

The goal is reached. The women, closely veiled, turn to the left, gently returning the salutation of the matron on guard. The men bend round to the chapel on the right, the entrance of which a cleric watches. The vaulted roof and walls are adorned with symbolical paintings, to which the soft light of the lamps lends a peculiar charm. All breathes reverence and collection. In the background over a martyr's coffin rises the plain altar, upon which the deacon is already arranging the holy vessels. The faithful, on entering, place in a niche in the wall their offerings, bread and wine, and wait, standing, for the holy act, whilst the clergy take their place in the *Presbyterium*. But the venerable form of holy Stephen on a marble seat forms the central point of the scene. With mild fatherly eye he surveys the little band and rises from the throne. He opens his prophetical mouth, and, as a stream, words of peace and encouragement flow out into the hearts of the faithful, so that a mighty movement passes through the assemblage. Then the high priest advances to the altar and commences, turned towards the people, the holy mysteries. What an unearthly fire glows on his countenance, as praying he stretches out his hands! What marvellous heavenly flames



burn in his blissful and enraptured eyes, when he beholds the Lamb of God lying before him ! Is it the feeling of the bliss so near, the mysterious presentiment of which seizes on the old man ? Hark ! there sounds a clatter of arms ; the glare of torches presses on from the neighbouring gallery. A troop approaches—'tis the emperor's dreaded soldiery. The *luminare* has borne to them the holy chant of the assemblage, and betrayed the place of asylum. Madly they clear the way. Yet lo, as if exorcised by a higher Power, they remain rigid on the threshold of the entrance ! The holy Pope completes the Sacrifice, prays for his persecutors, and not till he has sat himself down on his seat do they advance with drawn swords, and the sacrificing priest now himself becomes, under their murderous hands, the glorious victim.

We have now opened the way to the object of these pages. The Catacombs, during the storms of the transmigration of nations robbed and laid waste by the barbarians, and afterwards for the most part buried by ruins and washed in earth, fell into complete neglect, and were in the time of the Maltese Antonio Boseo (1593) an unknown, forgotten district. With this learned man, the Columbus of subterranean Rome, com-

menced a series of most earnest researches, which again awakened interest in the Catacombs, and paved the way to the knowledge of them. Still, to our age, particularly to the glorious reign of Pope Pius IX., was the glory reserved of giving these researches an impetus which has surpassed the boldest expectations. A "second Damasus," Pius IX. has for nearly twenty years caused excavations to be made at sacrifices the most high-minded, which enable the far-famed de Rossi to furnish in classical works an abundance of the most interesting discoveries, and out of the material gained to erect a complete scientific edifice. Only when these works are complete, will their incalculable worth be fixed for almost all branches of science. We hope, however, from the value of present results, to give a little contribution to Catholic apology.

A.—THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT.

IV.—*The Blessed.*

The places, from the monuments of which we will obtain a picture of the primitive Church, are, as we have seen, pre-eminently grave places.

This circumstance determines the course of our enquiry. It will naturally proceed from that sphere of Dogma which is most nearly related to the chief destination of the Catacombs—the Communion of Saints—*i.e.*, from the Church triumphant, suffering, and militant. The departed souls of the just (so the Catholic faith teaches) are with God, dwell in heavenly peace, and live in the enjoyment of everlasting glory and bliss. Now do the graves of the Catacombs also proclaim to us this teaching? We will ask them, and observe that as a rule we only make use of monumental inscriptions and sculpture of the first three centuries, and on account of space only give entirely the first, when such is justifiable from their dogmatical importance. Thus we read: “Prima, thou livest in the glory of God and in the peace of our Lord Christ.” VIVIS IN GLORIA DEI ET IN PACE. “Here sleeps Severianus, full of love and innocence, the sleep of peace; his spirit was taken up to the light of the Lord.” IN LVCE DOMINI SVSCEPTVS. “To the well deserving Saxonias; she rests in peace in the everlasting house of God.” “Laurentius was born for eternity at the age of 20 years; he rests in peace.” NATVS EST IN ETERNVM. “Ursina,” “Agapa,” “Alogia,” “Felicissima,” “Fortu-

nata," &c. &c., "thou wilt live in peace in God," "for evermore," "eternally." "Hermiscus, my light, thou livest in God the Lord Christ." "Marcian, the newly baptized, for thee the heavens are open, thou wilt live in peace." CELI TIBI PATENT BIBES IN PACE. Lastly: "Alexander is not dead, but lives above the stars.....after a very short life he now shines in heaven." IN COELO CORVSCAT. The godly fallen asleep, the just departed home, then, live for ever; they are assumed to the perfect light of God, to the house of the Lord, to the glory of Christ: they are born for eternity, have entered the opened heavens, where they shine as the stars on the firmament,—this it is that sounds as a mighty and sweet jubilee-strain 'from the graves of the Catacombs, to comfort the hearts of those yet tarrying in banishment. What a solemn protest this triumphal joy and glad confidence of the Apostolic Church form against that unrefreshing, *soi-disant* primitive Christian view of the 16th century, which knows nothing of a Church triumphant, but rather allows to Christ alone the entrance to heaven; which even declares "the bare inquiry, whether the souls of the just are in bliss," "audacious;" which condemns the departed to a gloomy "life of slumber," and to a thousand

years exile in the “ forecourt of heaven,” where, till the last day, they are longing for the promised bliss !

V.—*Veneration of Saints.*

The Catholic faith does not confine itself to the joyful teaching that the souls of the just enter heaven ; it also assumes between this and the next world, between the Church militant and the Church triumphant, a living interchange of relations. All the redeemed are members of one body in Christ, form one bond, one great family, united by the tie of charity. But this spiritual union is brought about by means of prayer. The Blessed give us their intercession and assistance ; we, on our side, invoke them in love and veneration for this help. This is the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. Let us make a survey round the catacombs. Here, particularly over altar-tombs (Arcolosia), many images of departed martyrs or of the faithful meet the eye. They are, as a rule, surrounded by symbols of Paradise, flowers, birds, or palms, and always in a praying position. The upraised arms, the entire prayerful demeanour prove that there above they are not merely spectators, but also associates of their brethren struggling

on earth. And this belief, what powerful expression it finds in the writings on the graves ! "Sutius, pray for us, that we may be happy." PETE PRO NOS VT SALVI SIMVS. "Augenda, live in the Lord, and petition for us." EYXOY. "Son, may thy spirit rest happily in God ; pray for thy sister." PETAS. "Matronata Matrona, pray for thy parents ; she lived 1 year 52 days." PETE. "Atticus, thy (spirit) lives in the Good, pray for thy parents." "Jovian, live in God and be our intercessor." "Sabatius, sweet heart, pray and beseech for thy brothers and companions." PETE ET ROGA. "Here rests Anzilladei; pray for this thy only surviving scion, for thou tarryest indeed in eternal rest and bliss." "To the very worthy foster-daughter Felicitas, who lived 36 years ; (and by another hand) pray for thy husband Celfinian." "Gentianus, the believer, (rests) in peace ; he lived 21 years.....in thy prayers supplicate for us, for we know that thou art in Christ." Lastly, and therewith we will conclude the series of examples : "To the most sweet and industrious mother Catianilla ; may she pray for us." EYXOITO. Thus the eyes and hearts of those left behind pierce through the tomb of the dead, upwards to the regions of heaven, seek and find the glorified, and besiege them with

fervent prayers, child-like petitions and devout recommendations. Is not this the genuine Catholic spirit? Catholic trust, full of love and solicitude?

VI.

But these pious invocations, these prayers to the blessed, are perhaps only the greetings of private persons, which as little presuppose, as make a condition of, a public liturgical *cultus* of the saints. Looking away from the fact that we are dealing chiefly with the Catholic principle of the veneration of saints, (since, this once firmly established, the liturgical formula proves itself as a necessary postulate), still, distinct monumental testimonies are not wanting for this. The inscriptions in the Catacombs know two kinds of religious veneration, both, as now, liturgically characterised by the expression "in the name," IN NOMINE. 1st. They comprehend prayerful wishes, "in the name of God, Christ," or, "of the God Christ." For example, "Zosima, live in the name of Christ." "To Selia Victorina, who rests in peace in the name of Christ." In this case the invocation concerns God directly, the One alone worthy of adoration, the almighty Dispenser of graces. 2ndly. They

also comprehend invocations in the name of a saint, and then the prayer is only indirectly addressed to God, directly to the interceding power of the saint. Thus a gravestone says : "Rufa will live in the peace of Christ in the name of Peter," i. e. through the latter's mediating intercession. And on a drinking-glass discovered in the Catacombs, we read in writing of gold, "Vito, live in the name of Laurentius," as upon another in the same sense, "Ælianuſ, live in Christ and Laurentius," i.e. in the grace of Christ through the mediation and intercession of Lawrence. The public *cultus* of the saints receives a weighty confirmation in the indisputable fact, that ecclesiastical titles of honour were given to the most illustrious, in a certain manner canonized martyrs. They are called, "Lord," i.e. "governor," "mighty intercessor at the throne of God." DOMINVS, DOMNVS, also merely D; and already from the third century, "Saint," SANCTVS. Thus the names greet us : "Dominus Petrus, Paulus, Stephanus, Sixtus," "Domina Basilla," &c. We read further : "To the holy martyr Maximus." "To the Almighty Father and His Christ, and to the holy martyrs, Taurinus and Herculanus, Nevius, Diaristus and Constantine hourly offer thanksgivings." We will not multiply proofs, but in

lief thereof throw a light on the subject from another sphere—from that of the typical representations.

VII.—*Cultus of Mary.*

We commence this part of the inquiry with a question, which no doubt has already occurred to the reader. If the veneration of saints among the first Christians is not only practically but even liturgically organised, how is it with Mary, the Queen of all saints? Does not she occupy her proper position in the heavenly hierarchy, and in the worship of the primitive Church? Or, is there ground for the assertion that the hyperdulic veneration and typical representation of Mary as Mother of God, date first from the Council of Ephesus (431)? The inscriptions on the graves testify only, as indication of the veneration of Mary, to the custom of adding her name to persons baptized. Otherwise they preserve unbroken silence respecting her *cultus*. The cause is not difficult to explain. The mystery of the Incarnation drew the ever-blessed Mother of God positively into the sphere of the Christian secret doctrines, and hence into the strictly veiled sanctuary of the discipline of the Arcana. Not in the monuments of

language, therefore, must we seek Mary, but in the works of sculpture—those hieroglyphics so full of intelligence for the initiated. They will convincingly demonstrate that also on this point the present Church is the heiress and true image of the Apostolic. The pictures of the Madonna from the first centuries of the Church, discovered up to now, form already a considerable collection, and render open testimony for a superior *cultus* of Mary, for a dazzling elevation accorded to her above all the other saints. The representation is twofold: Mary appears either sitting on a throne, the divine Child in her arms, or standing, praying with hands extended, i. e. either pre-eminently as the glorious Mother of God, or as the merciful Mother of men. Let us enter for a moment the Catacomb of Priscilla. It would not be amiss to call it, on account of the many representations out of this sphere, "the Marian Catacomb." Its oldest crypts were built by St. Priscilla, mother of the Senator Pudens, and grandmother of the holy virgins Prassedē and Pudentiana, and indeed, still in Apostolic times. Let us proceed from the central crypt, the "Grecian Chapel," as it is called. Here surprises us, just opposite the entrance, on the most honourable place, the key-stone of the vault, the Holy Virgin with

the Child, together with the three kings, who are offering their gifts. In a neighbouring chamber we then become aware, likewise in the middle part of the vault, of a new scene. It is the most ancient "Annunciation of Mary," till now known, (a picture most important in many respects,) in which the angel, represented as a youth without wings, is addressing the Virgin, who for distinction's sake occupies a seat of honour. In a third *cubiculum* appears Mary, amidst other symbolical scenes, with the Child Jesus. Not far from this chamber, a grave-niche, rich in pictures, rivets the eye. Mary, with the Child, adorns the vault of the same on the right. The holy Virgin, clad in a richly folded under-garment and mantle, wears on her head, according to the custom of betrothed or espoused, and also of virgins espoused to God, a light veil. Over the Virgin hovers the Star of Bethlehem, which almost always accompanies her, but before her stands the youthful figure of a man. It is Isaias, the Prophet of Mary. He has, after ancient custom, the mantle thrown over his shoulder, and in the left hand a roll of writing, whilst the right points to the Virgin and the star, as were he prophesying the Divine virginal maternity and the "great light" gone

up over Israel (Is. ix. 2; lx. 2, 19; Luke i. 78). The beauty of the composition, the dignity and grace diffused over the figures, the unaffectedness and yet powerful touch of the pencil, mark the painting as classical, and would, even if the topography of the cemetery, and the apostolic form and simplicity of the inscriptions, did not so decisively speak for it, leave no doubt remaining as to its having been executed between 50 and 150 A.D., perhaps even under the eyes of the Apostles. We have however only described a portion of the fresco-paintings which adorn this memorable tomb. At the side of the group round the Madonna, the Good Shepherd, followed by a sheep and a goat, is carrying back the strayed lamb to the fold. This is the one half of the vault. The other is, alas, destroyed, but contained, as must be concluded from analogous representations, the praying figure of Mary, to whom the Good Shepherd carries, as it were, the saved lamb. In this penetrating composition, which is often repeated in the Catacombs, Mary is at the same time Mother of God, spiritual ancestress of men, (the new Eve) type and protectress of the Church as of the Christian soul. Lastly, in a third group, which is distributed on both sides of the niche, appears on

the right Isaias once more, with his hand pointing significantly to three figures on the other side. It is the holy family, and certainly, as appears from the age of the Boy Jesus, in the Temple at Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph, full of adoring wonder at the mysterious event, have extended their arms as if in ecstasy, whilst in a picture in the Catacomb of Callistus, which likewise represents the Finding in the Temple, only reversed, the Divine Boy has also received this mystical expression of overwhelming rapture. So much for that memorable burial-place. It would carry us too far, if we should wander with the reader in a similar way through the remaining cemeteries, which contain paintings of Mary. We repeat that they all represent Mary's dignity as Mother of God, or her office as intercessor. This representation is, as a rule, accompanied by the Wise Men of the East, (whose traditional number of three receives noteworthy confirmation,) a composition which must have the deeper touched the hearts of the first Christians, the more vividly it placed before their eyes their call from Paganism, as well as the blessed Authors of the same, Jesus and Mary. The second conception is sometimes still more elevated by typical allusion. Thus, in the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellus,

the heavenly intercessor appears accompanied by two men, who are supporting her arms extended in prayer, as once Aaron and Hur did on Mount Horeb the arms of Moses. Mary, this is the meaning of the beautiful parallel, lifts up untiringly, on God's holy mountain, her arms of prayer for Israel fighting here below, and as she intercedes, victory over Amalek, the persecuting heathenism, cannot fail. Another representation engraved on gold-leaf, which causes the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, to take the place of those two men by Mary, i. e. to support the latter in her intercession for the Roman Church, seems to be related to this. We pass by, as being known, that celebrated painting of the Madonna with the Child, praying, which is in the Cemetery of St. Agnes; in the Lady Chapel, as it is called. We do not, however, venture to leave unnoticed one important representation, which adorns an ancient Christian Sarcophagus. On the left, in the upper division, sits God the Father on His throne, whilst the Son is presenting to Him the first created human pair; and the Holy Ghost, the Third of the Three Divine Persons, fashioned quite alike as old men, holds the hand supported on the back of the throne. In the corresponding lower division, the Mother of

God occupies a similar throne, but not overhung by a canopy, upon which the Holy Ghost, from whom Mary conceived, again leans, whilst the Son of God is now reposing as a child upon her lap and receiving the gifts of the three Wise Men, the representatives of the New Creation. We must refrain here from following up further the rich comprehensiveness of the scene, in order to turn our attention to a class of monuments of great importance to the *cultus* of Mary. We mean the already mentioned gold-enamelled drinking-glasses of the third and fourth centuries.

There have been discovered in the mortar of the graves in the catacombs about four hundred fragments, the remains of some smaller goblets rounded off at the bottom in the shape of an egg, and of some larger cups with handles. On the surface of the bottom—only this, the most solid portion of the glasses, has come to us,—the Christian artist fastened a leaf of gold, cut therein with the graving tool his inscriptions, symbols, biblical scenes and figures, and poured over this a protecting coat of glass. These remarkable drinking cups were used at the love feasts, which were held after baptism, marriage and funeral solemnities, but particularly on the public festivals of saints. Hence

their importance for our subject. For, a strikingly large number of the glasses bear the picture of the Blessed Virgin, usually in an interceding posture, and with the inscription MARIA. Sometimes the *nimbus* or ray of glory adorns the Queen of Heaven, a distinction which at first only Christ received, in the third century also Mary, and first in the fifth and sixth the other saints and the angels. From this the reader will perceive what a bright light these drinking cups throw on Mary's privileged position as Mother of God and Queen of Angels and Saints, as also on her *cultus* and festivals in the primitive Church. Let us conclude our Mariological researches with the description of a glass, the enamelled picture on which carries us at once into the holy obscurity of ancient Christian symbolism. The Princes of the Apostles, SS. Peter and Paul, occupy the middle of the surface of the gilded bottom, around whom the following scenes are placed in a row. First appears the Prophet of Mary again, Isaias, recognisable by the "sun" and the "great book roll," in which he is to write Emanuel's mysterious birth. (Isaias vii. viii. and lx.) He is contemplating with his prophetical countenance the Holy Virgin and points to her, as with extended arms she stands

praying between two olive trees, emblems of the two evergreen, i.e. imperishable, Testaments. Next Mary a mystical representation of the death of Christ on the cross is arranged by means of the picture of the said prophet, who, unclothed and standing upright in the form of a cross, is being sawn through by two men. For "Isaias," says Tertullian, "died by the wood, as he preached Christ." Then three, partly explanatory, partly supplementary groups are added with the Saviour Himself. First He raises up the rod for the brazen serpent lying at His feet, then strikes, to symbolize Faith, like Moses, the water of His doctrine out of the rocks, and lastly, by touching with the rod, saves the three young men, types of the Resurrection, from the fiery furnace. These three scenes typify the Scripture text, John iii. 14-16, but the whole series the mystery of the Redemption, as prophesied by Isaias, brought about by means of Mary, worked out by Christ, and, lastly, preached unfalsified by the Princes of the Apostles, i.e., by the Roman Church.

VIII.

When one surveys the series of ancient Christian paintings of the Madonna, one is justly astonished at the fulness of the motive with which Mary already inspired the artists of the first centuries. More weighty for us is the conclusion, obtained by it, respecting the position of Mary as regards *cultus* in the primitive Church, and the homage paid her from the beginning. If we find the Son in no stage of His earthly life, least of all in His youth, without the Mother, why should she not be near and dear to the youthful Church of Christ? And if the morning star never more joyfully and cordially shines than when the rising sun is still battling with the shades of night, why should not Mary's star glitter too in mild benignity in the Christian morning sky, and make bright the tears and purple light of the Church in her bloody struggle with the night of Paganism?

That, next to the Mother of Jesus, His foster-father Joseph also enjoyed pious veneration, has already in part been shown. Here we will only mention one marble slab, upon which, near

the inscription "Severa, live in God," the Holy Family is so typified that Joseph holds the right hand stretched out over Mother and Child. Further, very important are the witnesses for the *cultus* of the Princes of the Apostles (ex. gra. the inscription over the bust of Peter, "Peter, be our protector,") as also of other very illustrious martyrs, who mostly have a wreath near or above them, or are also being crowned by Christ Himself with such—a distinction which, later expressed by the *nimbus*, should symbolize their glorification in heaven and in the Church.

In conclusion, three more most memorable writings on graves: "Here rest I, Mandrosa; faithful in Christ I observed His commandments, piously devoted to the service of the martyrs." MARTYRVM OBSEQVIIS DEVOTA. "Here lies Dionysius, an innocent little boy; (ye Saints) be mindful of us in your holy prayers." "Prectatus rests in peace; he lived nine years.....a foster-child of God, of Christ, of the martyrs." NVTRICATVS DEO CHRISTO MARTVRIBVS. And upon the family grave of a certain Bassus, "You were piously devoted to God and the Saints." DEO SANCTISQVE DEVOTI.

IX.—*Festivals of Saints.*

The veneration of Saints is in the Apostolic Church not merely a matter of private, but also of public *cultus*. To support this proposition by monumental testimonies was the object of our investigations. Let us bring these to a conclusion by a new argument. As now, so from the cradle of Christianity the heavenly life was pointed out, in opposition to the earthly, as the true natal day. Only this natal day was of importance to the first Christians: thousands of inscriptions on graves announce this alone, with omission of the year of death. These birthdays were further, in the case of saints and martyrs, noted in Calendars (*Martyrologies*), with the object of public solemn commemorations. They furnished the dates for the feasts of martyrs and saints. Many inscriptions have reference to them, as to recognised, officially appointed seasons. “Here rests Vitalis, the miller.....he was deposited in peace on the birthday feast of St. Soteres.” NATALE DOMNES SITIRETIS.—(10th February.) “Here slumbers Principalis.....deposited on the birthday feast of Sixtus.” NATALE SVSTI.—(6th Aug.) “Pecorius, dearly beloved, entered the

church-yard on the 9th July, and on the following martyr's festival was deposited," *DIE MARTVRORV*, i. e. on the feast of St. Felicitas and her sons. On these birth or feast days the faithful descended into the crypts, assisted at the holy Sacrifice offered up on the grave of the martyr concerned, learnt the acts of the same, sang hymns to his praise, and received from the altar-tomb the Holy Eucharist. At the conclusion, the opulent caused food and drink to be brought thither, which they enjoyed as a love-feast and shared amongst the poor. They also went from one martyr's tomb to the other, eating at each a little food, as a symbolical expression of the Communion of Saints.

X.—*Veneration of Relics.*

The inquiry has in the preceding section touched upon a practice of worship, which, as a specific Catholic one, deserves our consideration —the veneration of relics. The pious aversion to every desecration of the corpses, the application of costly aromatics and ointments, and lastly, the solemn mode of burial, decide the high esteem paid to the remains of martyrs. There have been found in the catacombs num-

berless flasks of blood, cloths and sponges, even vessels with blood-soaked earth, which tell us of the holy solicitude with which the first Christians collected the blood of martyrs, in order to lay it by the sacred bodies, or "to preserve it at home as a fountain of grace for their children." (St. Prudentius.) Exactly at this honour, which was paid to the relics of the witnesses of the faith, did the ancient heathen take the greatest offence, and expended their fury on the lifeless bodies too. But all the more diligently the Christians searched for the scattered or fallen corpses, forced their way in danger of death amongst the tortures and scaffolds, and threw themselves into the amphitheatre to gather up the blood shed for Christ, and to collect the holy relics. Who does not think with emotion of the holy sisters Praxedis and Pudentiana, who at such noble sacrifice buried three thousand corpses? Of the holy Pope Simplician, who carried out of the city with his own hands above three hundred into the Catacombs? Meanwhile this charity towards the holy remains of the martyrs in no wise extended only to the deposition. It blossomed to an enduring worship. Over the graves reared themselves altars and chapels, which were decorated with pictures, ornaments,



and lamps ; strewed with flowers and odoriferous essences, as still to this day relics on altars are censed. We already know the Cemetery of Lucina on the Appian Way. A great flight of pilgrims' steps, again uncovered, now leads into its holy vaults, from which one arrives in a stately gallery on the right.

Involuntarily we check our steps before a kind of sarcophagus-tomb, and read on the great marble stone: "To the Martyr and Bishop Cornelius." It is the celebrated burial-place of this holy Pope, whose head now enriches the relic-treasury in the Minster of St. Cornelius at Aix-la-Chapelle. Just before this tomb stands the marble stump of a pillar, about three feet high, and slightly hollowed out on the top. It served for the reception of a basin or wide cup, in which, in honour of the saint, was balsamic oil of nard, and a papyrus stick with a burning wick. Remains of pieces of pillars, or niches built for the same purpose, even the fragments of such cups, still quite saturated with oil, have been discovered at the graves of the most illustrious martyrs. Now the devout faithful used to take away some of this sweet-smelling oil, to apply it with confidence in sickness, and preserve as a costly relic—for the bones themselves were left undisturbed in the

first centuries—in flasks or metal reeds. We will forego further exposition of the facts, firmly established by study of the Catacombs, that, on the one hand, the Roman Christians already in the first century protected, as their dearest treasure, the holy bodies of the Princes of the Apostles against the Orientals claiming them, while on the other, the schismatical Novatians, in want of a Martyr's body for the celebration of Mass, stole by force that of the holy Silanus, youngest son of St. Felicitas, out of the Catacomb of Maximus. We will remember but two more witnesses for the *cultus* of relics. The first lies in the pious emulation of Christian antiquity to be buried* above or near to Martyrs, frequently at the expense of beautiful pictures on the walls. The second is given by the reliquaries discovered in numbers in the graves, little boxes, in which, at first, only objects touched by relics, later, also relics themselves, were preserved with devotion and confidence in the protection of the Saint. They were pre-

* S. Ambrose aptly gives the motive for this pious custom in the inscription which he put on his brother's grave-stone: "This is the reward of holiness, that blood shed for the Faith also penetrates with its grace and moistens the neighbouring grave;" as also St. Chrysostom in the words, "not only the bones of the martyrs, but also their tombs and reliquaries are full of blessings."

ferably worn, as the rings or ear-rings applied prove, round the neck, and were given the form of the cross, particularly after the fourth century.

XI.—*Pilgrimages.*

As the wandering of the holy women to Mount Calvary was the first devotion of the Stations of the Cross, so their walk to the grave of Jesus was the first Christian pilgrimage, the immortal type of all future pilgrimages and visits to graves. The martyrs' graves at Rome, in the first rank those of the Princes of the Apostles, were also, as the monuments teach us, already from the first century, and after the victory of the cross (312) in a much greater degree, the objects of devout pilgrimages. Not only the faithful from Rome, but also Christian pilgrims from the farthest Provinces of the Empire, paid their vows at the graves of the martyrs, and returned blessed, often wonderfully favoured, as is to be inferred from votive tablets, to their homes again. It is affecting and peculiarly touching to the Catholic heart, when, in wandering through the still holy City of the Dead, one reads, after so many centuries, the thousands of Latin and Greek *graphiti*, i. e.

memorials and sentences of prayer, which, scratched by the hand of pious pilgrims of that primitive epoch on the plaster of the wall of the crypts and galleries, proclaim so exceeding a tender confidence in the Saints. In the Catacombs of Callistus, in which alone, according to Bosio, 174,000 martyrs were deposited, we read, for example, "Oh thou (true) City of Jerusalem, ornament of the Martyrs of the Lord." "Ye holy Martyrs, be mindful of the (pilgrim) Dionysius." "Be mindful of Elaphius,"—"of Mary," &c. "Pray, that Verecundus, with his family, may obtain a happy voyage home on the sea." "Beg for my father and brothers eternal rest, that they may live with the All-bountiful." "Holy Xystus, think (of me) in thy intercessions." "Holy Sustus deliver.....,"—"hear," &c. In the Cemetery of Pontianus, between many others, is the beautiful memoria: "(I) Eustathius, the poor sinner, the priest, servant of the blessed Martyr Marcellus (write this;) but do thou, oh reader, pray for me and may the Lord protect thee." Accompanied by such hearty prayers, one can pursue the pilgrim's way of prayer through all the principal galleries of the Cemetery. Thus, in that of Callistus, a pilgrim, probably of the third century, wrote a prayer for a Sophronia, who

had gone home and was dear to him, and for whom in pious love he had undertaken the pilgrimage. We first find his prayer just at the entrance; "Sophronia, mayest thou live (in God !") Then further under a *luminare*, "Sophronia (live) in the Lord !" and thus similar exclamations from gallery to gallery, until at the exit under an Arcolosium the prayer greets us no more, but in larger letters, the cry of joyful assurance, "Sophronia, sweet Sophronia, thou wilt evermore live (in) God ! thou wilt live (in) God !"

XII.

We have arrived at the conclusion of our inquiry about the Church triumphant. The Communion of Saints, their *cultus*, the veneration of their relics, the pilgrimages to their graves,—all these Catholic dogmas and practices, passionately condemned as "superstitious, anti-Christian and idolatrous," sprout forth with unsuspected force from the soil of the primitive Church, and impregnate with their blossom-like scent the atmosphere of death, which surrounds the first Christians. These heroes are invincible, not because, like the mythical giant Antæus, they touch earth, but because they

touch heaven. Three contemporaries of the fourth century, different in their position and partly in their sentiments, may light us out of this part of our studies of the Catacombs. The first is a heathen sophist, Eunapius by name, (about 390) in whose writings, just lately published in Paris, we read the following remarkable passage : "The heads and bones of Martyrs are sacred to the Christians ; they throw themselves down with devotion before them, in the delusion that they are doing something praiseworthy, whilst, in fact, they only approach the graves of condemned evil-doers, and cover themselves with the shame of the same..... The Martyrs rank with them as patrons, advocates and bearers of their prayers to God."— Let the second surety be the holy Pope Damasus (366-384), whose poems of praise, still plentiful on the marble slabs, and in beautiful caligraphy, please the visitor to the Catacombs. He highly extols the merits of the Martyrs, pays homage to their power with God, calls their remains "holy limbs," "happy ashes," "pious bones." Thus we read in the Cemetery of St. Sebastian :—

" Whoe'er thou art that reads, revere this tomb of Saints,
 Though rolling on his course time marks nor name nor date,
 Yet know that Damasus the Pope adorned this holy grave,
 Rendering indeed his pious vow, paid to the Martyrs,
 Since Christ brought back to the true fold the Shepherds* who
 had fled."

In another, to St. Eutychius :—

" Seeking we found him. Who grants all things earns praise.
 What Damasus on stone engraved do thou revere."

Further, to St. Lawrence :—

" An altar gift of ornament doth Damasus present,
 And on the Martyr's merit suppliant relies."

Lastly, to St. Agnes :—

" Of holy innocence the ornate tomb let souls devout revere.
 Invokes thee Damasus, me also hear, oh Virgin!"

Let the "Iberian Poet," Prudentius, the holy bard of the ancient Church, follow as the third surety, who, born in the year 348, yet beheld the primitive glory of the Catacombs, and thus celebrates in song the crypt of St. Hippolyte :—

" Here in a rock concealed Hippolytus' corpse is laid ;
 Above an altar rears sublime, honoring the Almighty God.
 For holy Food his table serves, whilst underneath
 Formed vault guards faithfully the Martyr's corpse,
 Preserving there till judgment-day his honoured bones,
 And heavenly Feast supplying to ancient faithful Rome.

* From the schism of Ursizinus, in the year 380.

Whene'er the heart is raised in prayer, what doubt
 That hope doth smile and peace descend with healing from
 above.

So have I found it; hence relief and blessing came,
 And joyful I returned to tell, oh Priest, what boon I gain'd,
 How, thanks to Hippolytus, I felt in Christ
 The Martyr gives efficiency to prayers.

The Chapel all surmounts, with silver ore bedeck'd;
 The tomb and tablets smooth as a still deep stream,
 Reflective as a mirror, sparkling as crystal gem,
 Such gifts, like Nature's, bestowed with splendid hand.
 As you pace on to the within, Pillars of Parian hue
 Adorn the track, and graceful greet the view,
 From morn till dewy eve the prayerful come
 Devoutly to salute the gloried Saint;
 Wide Latium spreads afar her living host,
 And nations countless court the faithful throng;
 Devotion meekly kneels to kiss the tomb,
 And bathes the shrine with balmy tears of love;
 And when returns the time that Heaven's bright birth began,
 What myriads crowd together! A goodly band
 Faithful and true to praise this solemn Festal day!"

B.—THE CHURCH SUFFERING.

XIII.—*Prayers for the Dead.*

As the souls of the just are in heavenly peace,
 full of active love for their brethren not yet
 departed, so according to Catholic teaching those
 souls, which have departed in grace indeed, but
 are not perfectly pure, still exist in a middle
 state of painful longing, purification, expiation,

and of temporal punishment. They are the suffering members of the redeemed family of God, the poor and needy children of the Church; ought not the Church triumphant and the Church still militant to come interceding to their help? Her love would verily be no more a Catholic, an all-embracing one. But such a love does blow refreshingly against us from the graves of the Catacombs. First it expresses itself in benedictory salutations and wishes, which, like bright sparks of love, mount up to the hearts of those left behind. "Sabina," "Victoria," "Emerita," "Faustina," &c.; "mayest thou live in God." "Erenea, mayest thou live in God and Christ!" "Regina, mayest thou live in the Lord Jesus!" "Hyla, live in peace in Christ the God!" "Ursula, mayest thou be accepted in Christ!" ACCEPTA SIS. "Dioscurus," "Pontia, live for ever!" "Ulpia, mayest thou be partaker of life with thy brothers!" VIVA SIS. The more frequent, significant wish: "mayest thou live with the saints!" CVM SANCTIS INTER SANCTOS, is suitable here; and the cry so hearty and tender, "Be of good cheer!" "Be comforted!" "Have confidence!" CONFIDE, ΟAPPEΙ, EΥΨΥXEΙ, as would they say: "Have but courage, thou wilt soon be released!" It does not however

stop at concealed wishes ; on many grave-stones it passes over to veritable intercession. "Demetrius and Leontia to Syrica, their well-deserving daughter ; be mindful, Lord Jesus, of our child," MNHC@HC. "O God, who sitteth at the right hand of the Father, place the soul of Nectarius in the place of Thy saints." "Here, oh most sweet son, was the term of thy life finished : yet, oh Almighty Father, I beseech Thee, have pity on his sufferings, have mercy on our darling.....through Jesus Christ," ORO MISERERE LABORVM. "To Lucifer.....which-ever of the brothers reads this, pray God that her holy and innocent spirit may be assumed to God." ROGET DEO. To this are added countless *graphiti*, scratched in the chalk, or at the closing of the grave in the still wet mortar, ex. grat.: "Lord, help thy (departed) servant Benjamin." How constant the Church herself has remained in her love for the departed, is clear from the prayer of the priest in the present Canon of the Mass, which can be constructed word for word from the inscriptions of the Catacombs. Thus we read : "Here sleeps in peace Aur. Ælianuſ, God's believing servant ; oh God, be mindful of him in eternity." Similarly many others. For what in particular concerns the conclusion of the sacerdotal memento, fresh

proofs are daily brought to light from the excavations in the Catacombs. We already possess a considerable number of sentences on graves, which pray for alleviation, refreshment or relief, as if from burning torments. A selection only here. "May God refresh the soul of Homillus." **REFRIGERA.** "Rusina," "Calemera, may God refresh thy spirit." "Bolosa," "Antonia, may God refresh thee in Christ,"—"in peace." "Expectatus," "Alexander and Pompeia, may ye receive alleviation." "To the well-deserving Bonifacia; may the Almighty God Christ refresh thy spirit (in the holy cross, for which the monogram stands)." "Victoria, may thy spirit be refreshed in the All-bountiful." "Sylvana, mayest thou be refreshed with the holy spirits." "(May) thy soul, Victorin, (dwell) in refreshment." **IN REFRIGERIO.** "The parents to their dearest daughter Avia Paulina, whose spirit may the Lord take up into refreshment." As this heavenly refreshment is to deliver from the pain of fire and the languishing, so shall the Eternal Light release from the darkness of the purifying prison. "Lord, let not the spirit of Veneria be overshadowed." **NE ADVMBRETVR.** "The eternal light (lighten) thee, Timothea, in Christ." **AETERNA TIBI LVX.** However, by far the most current amongst the ancient Christians,

as still now with the Church, is the prayer for everlasting peace, *i.e.* for release from the place of banishment, and admission to the vision of God. "Aquilina and Eusebius! sweet peace to you in God." PAX VOBIS. "Gensanus, peace be to thy spirit." "Laurentia, sweeter than honey, rest in peace." QVISSCE. "Lais, (dwell) in peace; may her spirit rest in the All-good." "Leontius, thy brothers beg for thee peace from God." PAX A FRATRIBVS. To this class belongs also the formula, predominating particularly in the most ancient Catacombs, the Apostolic, as they are called, "Peace with thee!" PAX TECVM. "Thee (may Christ let dwell) in peace!" TE IN or CVM PACE: as also the customary, in a manner official wish in prayer, "May your soul rest, live in peace," which occurs a thousand times in words or symbols (grapes and olive-branches).

XIV.

The love of the first Christians to the poor souls is not confined to hearty sympathy and prayer. It shews itself besides, quite suiting the Catholic conception of the merit of good works, as active in many ways. It causes the holy Sacrifice to be offered up, particularly on

the anniversaries of decease ; imposes upon itself good works for the dead ; undertakes weary pilgrimages ; interposes the help of the Saints. For the latter, inscriptions on graves and thousands of mementos on the walls of the crypts testify. “We commend to thee, Domina Basilla, our daughter Crescentia.” **COMMENDAMVS TIBI.** “May Dominus Hippolytus beg for thee refreshment.” “Martyr Januarius, refresh the spirit of (Maxi)mus.” “Here rests Cyriace.....the holy martyrs, as a testimony of her life, will be her advocates with God and Christ.” **ERVNT ADVOCATI.** Many pictures on graves shew forth the patronal office of the Saints. We see there the Saviour depicted as Judge, and near Him Saints, who, as if assessors and assistant Judges, likewise sit on seats,—unmistakably the expression of pious confidence in the intercession of the same, and in the application of their merits.

We herewith conclude our inquiry respecting the Church suffering, convinced that a further exhaustion of material for the formation of a judgment is uncalled for. Let the trial be made, and a non-Catholic, whose symbolical books represent the doctrine of a place of purification as “a vile invention of the Devil,” be conducted into the ancient Christian

cemeteries and museums. Here you may safely leave to him the decision, whether those venerable vaults do not bear the physiognomy of a Catholic God's-acre; whether Catholic love does not twine itself about their graves, as the ivy, in its fresh luxurious green, winds itself round the monuments. He will, if he be sincere, just as little deny the fact as the reformer of Geneva, who has left behind him this remarkable confession; "The custom of offering up prayers for the departed already existed 1300 years ago, (*i.e.* in the Apostolic age)—*sed omnes, fateor, in errorem abrepti fuerunt.*" (!)

C.—THE CHURCH MILITANT.

XV.—*Alone-beatifying.*

It yet remains for the completion of our study to elucidate by means of the knowledge of the Catacombs the teaching of the Church militant. The primitive monuments represent the Church on earth as the Ark of God, built by Christ, the heavenly Noe and ancestor of a newly saved race; *i.e.*, as the alone-beatifying institution of mercy and salvation.

We must here interpose a remark. Ancient Christian art is symbolical and under the influence of a loftier science. Intercourse with the heathen subjected not only writing and speech, but also painting and sculpture, to the discipline of the laws of the Arcana, and contrived by their means to conceal the mysteries of the Faith. Symbolical representations have therefore, as a rule, quite another and deeper sense than that which strikes the superficial observer. They are but an historical or symbolical cloak, which is governed and penetrated by the veiled idea. This is the case particularly with biblical scenes, and explains the appearance, that they seldom exactly adhere to the description in Holy Scripture, because they are not intended to be representations of the naked facts. Thus then, we generally see Noe depicted in the chambers of the dead with his body half out of a four-cornered box, which is half opened and scarcely capable of containing him ; here, as a youth ; there, as an old man ; sometimes even represented as a female figure, the arms extended praying, and over him frequently the dove with the olive-branch. In this representation we have a picture of the departed Christian, who, out of the earthly Church, the firm Ark, rises to resurrection and eternal life in God, because

he has died in the Church, at peace with her ; not as those "who have departed without peace" (S. Epiphanius). Can the Catholic dogma, "out of the Church no salvation," be more expressively symbolised ? But the ship of salvation swims on the deluge of the world ; *i. e.*, the Church upon earth is militant, oppressed and persecuted. To allegorize this more clearly, Noe (Christ) once appears, instead of in the box, in a round vessel (wine press) tastefully ornamented with lions' heads. This conception is also often the foundation of representations of Jonas. We see on a storm-raging sea a ship, the mast, yards, or helm of which are ornamented sometimes with the cross, sometimes with a symbol of Christ (a Fish or monogram), or again, the Dove of the Holy Ghost. In the ship there is also a praying figure, emblem of the Church and of Mary; or it bears, as a sign of Divine protection, the inscription "Jesus." The stormy sea manifestly denotes the struggling condition of the Church. But in the sea swims a monster, which, with its giant's head, thin neck, and twisted tail, does not so much represent Jonas' fish, as the Dragon of Hell. The prophet being now hurled into the jaws of the sea-animal may have a double meaning. It is in the first

place to be thereby perceived, how the Christian, who as an apostate or excommunicated person, leaves the safe ship of the Church, falls into the possession of Satan. In this conception it contains an argument for our reasoning. But it is also hereby typified, how the Christian, dying out of the bosom of the Church, sinks into the grave, *i. e.*, rushes into the jaws of death. And as the sea-monster gave up Jonas—type of the resurrection of Christ—so the tomb will also one day give back the Christian dead, that they may for ever rest in the shades of Paradise. How strikingly the generally combined scenes of the punishment, saving, and rest of Jonas under the green gourd-tree express this, we only require to indicate.—In conclusion we may mention two more representations, which stamp the alone-beatifying character of the Church, in her strict separation from the erring and unbelieving. One is on both sides of an *Arcosolium*. We perceive on the right the picture of the Good Shepherd, guarding his sheep on good rich pasturage, whilst on the left is the hireling, who is preparing amongst reeds and moor-grass to milk his sheep in a brutal way,—a counter-representation of the blessing of the Catholic Church, and the complete curse of heresy. In the second repre-

sentation we see a lamb between two greedy wolves; over the first, the inscription SVS ANNA; over the latter, SENIORIS (Elders). The first allegorizes the chaste bride of the Eternal Lamb, the Church; but the unchaste old men, her unhappy adversaries falling under the judgment of God.

XVI.—*Visible.*

The exclusive institution of salvation established by Christ is, according to Catholic confession, visible as to its members, one in worship, doctrine and pastoral office in regard to external society. The monuments of the Catacombs impress also this mark. The Church appears upon them as a mountain, rock, bark, and city of God, as the fold of Christ, which encloses not only sheep, but also goats or sinners. Her division of members into rulers and subjects is ever sharply marked. The former are teachers, priests, and shepherds; the latter bearers, laics and governed; both so indeed, from above, by Christ and the Holy Ghost. Hence, Christ hands to the Apostles the new law in the form of a book-roll, sends them forth as preachers, makes them priests and judges. And as Christ empowered the Apostles, so the Bishop empowers the lower clerics, who,

as many stone tablets expressively say, exercise their office at the command of the Bishop, of the Pope, IVSSIONE EP. or PP. The laics are "faithful," "brethren;" never "clergy," or "priests." It cannot well be more strongly protested against the doctrine of the "sovereignty of the people," than it is by the ever-recurring picture of the Good Shepherd with His sheep, which so sharply marks the difference, as well as the mutual relation of the ecclesiastical state. The shepherd's pipe in the same indicates the mild teacher; the staff, the ruler; the milk-vessel, as we will demonstrate in its place, the priest. But a lamb of plain design adorns many grave-stones, as if the believing soul, still in death, would fain confess its true obedience to ecclesiastical authority.

XVII.—*The Roman Primacy.*

The representation of the Good Shepherd, or rather of the "one Shepherd and the one fold," directs our inquiry to the unity of the Church, and her hierachal head in the primacy. There is scarcely a Catholic fundamental doctrine which is more expressively proclaimed by the stony witnesses of the Catacombs, than just this one. First of all they dispose for ever

of every doubt of Peter's death at Rome. Then they unfold, in a rich symbolical series of pictures, such unequivocal representations of the supreme pastoral office of Peter, that one cannot linger by them without deep impression, nor deny without difficulty a providential design in them. At once the fact, that from the first century the representations of the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, founders of the Roman Church, spread themselves, accurate in likeness and evidently as portraits, throws a ray of light on their privileged position. This is meanwhile found more definitely expressed. Thus, we see in the Catacomb of Domitilla the two Apostles, near the Saviour, represented on seats, whilst the remaining Apostles are depicted standing. If the Princes of the Apostles appear alone, again the precedence of Peter over Paul is mostly indicated. Sometimes he assumes the place of honour, or stands a pace in advance; sometimes he is distinguished by a particular ornament, for example, a stole with jewels; or he sits on a throne, whilst Paul occupies an ordinary seat. Far more distinctly, however, and with wonderful depth of conception, do the symbolical or allegorical representations give expression to this superior rank. They form, so to speak, a complete treatise on the

Primacy of Peter. In Noe, he there appears as the head of the newly redeemed race; in Abraham sacrificing, as the pontifical representative of Christ, and father of a great posterity; in Moses, lastly, the most shining and proper "type of Peter" (St. Augustine), as the supreme teacher, lawgiver, and judge. When we see Moses unloosing his shoes before the burning bush, and God's hand stretching over him from a cloud, or standing on Sinai, to receive the tables of the Law from His hand, it indicates the vocation of Peter as proclaimer, propagator, and expounder of the New Law. But when Moses with the rod strikes the rock in the wilderness, so that water streams forth (and the explanation of this most significant representation is once indeed given by the inscription PETRVS), there is contained therein the whole summary of the prerogative of Peter. For upon many frescos, sarcophagi, and glasses, we see Christ with the staff or sceptre, emblem of His authority and kingly power, working different miracles; and to this are ranged three scenes appertaining to one another; 1st. The delivery of this staff by Christ to Peter, who has his finger laid on the lips, and the cock by his side: 2ndly. The taking of Peter prisoner: 3rdly. The repre-

IX.—*Festivals of*

The veneration of Saints is
Church not merely a matter
also of public cultus. To
position by monumental testi-
object of our investigations. I
to a conclusion by a new argu-
so from the cradle of Christian
life was pointed out, in opposi-
as the true natal day. Only
was of importance to the
thousands of inscriptions on
this alone, with omission of the
These birthdays were further
saints and martyrs, noted in
tyrologies), with the object of
commemorations. They furnish
the feasts of martyrs and
scriptions have reference to
nised, officially appointed sanc-
Vitalis, the miller.....he was
on the birthday feast of St.
DOMNES SITIRETIS.—(10th
slumbers Principalis.....
birthday feast of Sixtus.”
Aug.) “Pecorius, dearly |

THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

We see at first sight that the
christian is a symbol of the
beginning of a new creation
brought about by the death and
resurrection of Christ.

One of the best of the symbols is
the dove as a symbol of peace.

With symbolic language as a rule, we find that
what which seems to us to be
symbols but are but an expression of a truth.
Truth is governed and controlled by law.

This is the case with the dove,
and especially with the dove in
the New Testament. In
the Old Testament, because the dove is
the representation of the dead. Thus
we generally see the dove in the
hands of the dead who die body and soul.
A four-cornered dove which is well opened and
easily capable of containing him; here, as a
rule; there, as an old man; sometimes even
represented as a female figure, the arms extended
wing, and over him frequently the dove with
olive-branch. In this representation we have
sure of the departed Christian, who, out
of earthly Church, the firm Ark, rises to
resurrection and eternal life in God, because

sentation of Peter, striking water out of the rock with the staff he has received. We have evidently in this trilogy an illustration of the passage in St. Luke xxii. 32: ("I have prayed for thee,") *i. e.*, Peter's weakness in the denial, his strength in his believing confession, and his call to be the rock of the Church, *i. e.* her foundation and source of grace. As Moses, too, was the leader of old Israel, "so is Peter the leader of the new" (S. Prudentius), or the Christian people of God; as the former was chief of the Synagogue, so the latter is supreme head of the Church; as the one was the highest lawgiver and judge in the Old Law, so the other is in the New Law. He "the rock," strikes with the staff, *i. e.*, in the plenitude of Divine power, Christ the true rock of the Church, and elicits from Him the saving waters of doctrine and the sacraments, in order to dispense them pure and clear to all nations languishing in the wilderness of heathenism. Thus, this typical representation of Moses becomes a sun-glass which wonderfully reflects all the sunbeams of the Papal power, and its supreme doctrinal, sacerdotal and pastoral dominion. Let us contemplate another representation on a drinking-cup. Christ is standing on a mountain, from which issue seven

streams, reaching to Peter a roll on which we read the words, "The Lord gives the law;" but the Prince of the Apostles takes the roll (just as in other pictures the keys) in the folds of his robes, in sign of respect. Now governors were in the habit of receiving from the Emperors, with veiled hands, their rolls of instructions, exactly like this. Hence it becomes clear, that the Christian artist wished to represent Peter's nomination as Christ's governor on earth, as also the solemn delivery of the governing power in the Church, which last he has symbolised by a fruit-laden palm, as well as by the mountain with the seven streams. With this, however, the allusions of the picture are not yet exhausted. Peter bears, as further symbol, a cross on his shoulder, which the Fathers, according to Isaias ix. 6 and 22, consider as the sign of power and dominion. Lastly, in order to point out that this princely power belongs only to Peter, but not to the remaining Apostles, Paul stands opposite him, so that Christ, who is represented speaking, imparts to both the mission of apostolic preaching, but reaches to Peter alone the diploma and sceptre of a king. If the Church, as kingdom of Christ, possesses in Peter a governor, so, as ark and ship, she has in him a steersman. On an

elegant bronze lamp, which has the form of a ship with expanded sails, Paul is standing on the ship, but Peter guides the helm, and a tablet adorns the mast with the inscription already known to us, "The Lord gives the law." Paul, this is the meaning of the symbolism, rules as herald in the Church, but the steering, law-giving hand of Peter guides her safely through the stormy sea of the world to the coast of eternity. One more typical representation deserves our attention. We find it upon many sarcophagi, and pictures on walls; for example, in the apostolic Catacomb of Domitilla. In one of its galleries a fresco shows Elias, as ascending to heaven he leaves his mantle behind for Eliseus, who, also with covered hands, takes it up. The delivery of the mantle of a prophet, teacher, or saint, was held by the ancients, as is known, for a sign of lawful succession, representation, and inheritance of his spirit; wherefore the scholars of the prophets also cried out to Eliseus, "The spirit of Elias hath rested upon him." This fact discloses to us the meaning of the picture. It represents, in the figure of Elias, the Saviour, as mounting up to heaven, He delivers to the new Eliseus, i. e. Peter, His mantle, and with this "pallium," the governorship, the plenitude of

office and power in His Church; so that the Christian scholars of the prophets, the faithful, astonished, also confess, "the spirit of Christ rests upon Peter and his successors." Thus we see the hierachal primacy of the Popes confirmed in the most brilliant manner. Enter in spirit the venerable Papal grave-chambers of the Catacombs of the Vatican, and those of Callistus, and count the tombs. Not one will you find which does not shine with the brightness of martyrdom or sanctity! This is in truth also a primacy—that of courage in the faith, pastoral fidelity, and virtue, which weaves round the hierachal one a heavenly aureole, and writes in shining letters on the rocks of the Catacombs the undying promise, which glitters in silent majesty on the cupola of St. Peter's, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church."

XVIII.—*The Roman Church.*

The Catholic Church resembles a giant cathedral, with as many naves as there are nations singing in its halls the praises of God. In this cathedral, Rome is the chosen place, which bears the altar and throne of the High-priest. But the Sanctuary stands under

the particular protection of Him, Who built the mystical cathedral, *i.e.*, speaking with St. Cyprian, "the Church of Rome is from the beginning the foundation of the whole Church, the first and principal Church, to which untruth has no admittance." This praise confirms, in a remarkable manner, a peculiarity of the Roman inscriptions on graves. The holy greeting "of peace" adorns most of the ancient Christian graves. Now, because the Churches outside the Roman were in those times very much oppressed by false doctrine, dissension, and apostasy, it was customary to give to the departing the kiss of peace, to take into the grave with them, expressly in confirmation of their fidelity to the Church, and to write thereon, "He died in peace;" "obtained peace" (with the Church). Otherwise at Rome. Here the purport of the thousands of greetings of peace is simply, "he rests, sleeps, is deposited in peace," and has no reference to ecclesiastical peace, but solely to eternal and heavenly peace, as a glorious testimony that here heresy has never been dominant.

XIX.—*Evangelical Counsels.*

The Church is a divine organization, perfecting itself in the Roman primacy. Her object and fruit is the sanctity of her members. Hence, on the martyrs' graves the emphasized addition, "holy martyrs." But this care for holiness attains its height in the perfect imitation of Christ, *i.e.*, in the observance of the evangelical counsels or the vows of Holy Order. The Gospel of the sixteenth century has rejected them as "a delusion" and a "league of the devil's." Let us prove whether the first disciples of the Gospel of Christ also nourished so vicious a horror towards these most odoriferous blossoms of holiness, and highest nobility of Christian virtue. The Catacombs prove decidedly the contrary. We meet many times on pictures the Christian ascetics, the ancestors of monks, glorified by Justin. They wore, as we know, the philosopher's mantle, and lived in voluntary poverty, self-denial, and virginity. From them the bishops and clergy were by preference chosen. The witnesses for the female ascetics, virgins and widows consecrated to God, are more precise. They are called on the grave-stones, "virgins," "virgins of God,"

"holy, consecrated, blessed virgins of God," "maids of Christ," "holy, devout widows," "widows of God." "Here rests Victoria, the virgin of God." "Varennius Filumenus erects (this) to his daughter, the maid of Jesus Christ." ANCILLA. "Here slumbers in peace Aufenia, the blessed virgin." "To the most courageous virgin, Faustina." VIRG. FORTISSIMAE. "To the worthy and deserving virgin Adeodata; she rests here in peace at the command of her Christ," (i.e., her bridegroom). "In this tomb slumbers the virginal and consecrated maid Alexandra, who deserved to hasten to Christ assumed into heaven." PVELLA VIRGO SACRA. "Eusebia, the maid consecrated to the Lord, deserved, like the prudent virgins, to possess Christ as bridegroom." SACRA DOMINO PVELLA. "On the 31 May, Pretiosa fell asleep, a little maid just 12 years old, virgin and maid of God and of Christ." What the marble announces in words, that the pictures proclaim not less expressively in typical scenes. Thus, we see twice depicted over the grave of a certain Laurentia in the Catacomb of St. Agnes, near her praying figure, evidently in illustration of her earthly and heavenly lot, the prudent virgins, first as with their torches they are going to meet the bridegroom, and then as they keep the marriage

feast in heaven. Still more remarkable is an *arcosolium* in the cemetery of Cyriaca, not long discovered. The lunette of the niche shows in the middle the Saviour ; on His left, the foolish virgins, with their torches extinguished and fallen towards earth, whilst, on the right, the five prudent, who hold their lighted torches heavenwards, are invited by Him to the marriage. The arch of the vault contains, on one side, the prophecy of the fall of Peter, as a symbol of faith and watchfulness, on the other, the rain of manna. The praying figure of the departed herself occupies the middle field, on both sides of which a saint is depicted, lifting up a curtain. Lastly, the surface of the wall over the grave still shows traces of a picture of the Madonna, with the three kings. The departed, this is the meaning of the rich grave-ornament, has preserved herself as a prudent virgin, active in love; guided by believing watchfulness, and strengthened by the manna of the Eucharist, she has, under the protection of Mary, made herself worthy to be called by her Bridegroom to the marriage-feast, and conducted by saints into the bridal-chamber of heaven. But, for this subject, the Marian Catacomb of Priscilla must again give us the most important representation. Here in an arched niche on

the left appears Mary, with the Child, near the praying figure of the departed; on the right, on a *cathedra* is an old man (a bishop), about to hand, with the assistance of a deacon, the veil to a virgin standing before him; an extremely precious monument, which brings before us the liturgical act itself of taking vows. When, in harmony with these witnesses, the fathers of the primitive Church call the virgins consecrated to God, "blossoms of the Church," the "noblest portion of Christ's flock;" when Tertullian even informs us, that a great number of the married observed holy continency for the kingdom of heaven's sake, then the doctrine which declares virginity "heathenish," "sinful," "against God's command," speaks for itself.

XX.—*Catholicity.*

We must take leave of our readers, and do this with one concluding word about the Catholicity of the primitive Church. Rome was the central point of the old world. Eight-and-twenty splendid military roads led from the farthest provinces of the enormous kingdom, through as many gates, into the city of the world, and united themselves at the "golden

pillar" on the Forum. These roads were the channels by means of which Christians of all nations of the earth poured into the eternal city, and here, in the heart of the Church, by the "golden pillar" of truth and grace, erected by the Princes of the Apostles, they met each other. Pilgrims, and yet not strangers, they created, increased, and spread the Church of Rome, a wondrous witness of Catholic unity in belief, love, and holiness. And even this testimony has again received, in the still halls of the Catacombs, a grand and touching monument. Whoever causes the 12,000 Roman grave-inscriptions to be passed before him, and reviews the various coloured nationalities, Christians from Gaul, Spain, Africa, and Egypt, from Syria, all Asia, Thrace, and Greece, feels this cry of joy forcing itself from his deeply-moved breast : "Verily also the Rome of the Catacombs is already the Catholic stronghold, the true asylum of the whole world!"

PART II.
THE ROMAN CATACOMBS,
AND
THE SACRAMENTS
OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH.

SANCTORVM . QVICVNQVE . LEGIS . VENERARE
SEPVLCHRVM .

(Cemetery "Ad Catacumbas.")

Whoever busies himself with the Roman Catacombs, is reminded more than once of the excavations of Pompeii. Both engross, though in quite different spheres, the attention of the cultivated world. If, in earlier days, the searcher of profane antiquity could but laboriously and scantily sketch for himself a picture of the life of the ancients, from detached notices in the classics, and from imperfect monuments, now in Pompeii a whole city of the olden time suddenly awakes before our eyes from a sleep of 1800 years, and shakes off the ashes which were alike her grave and protecting cover. It is as if for her time's clock had for centuries stood still, and only now been again set going. We see the streets freshly furrowed with the traces of vehicles; the shops and magazines filled with provisions; the cellars with wine-casks; the soldiers' quarters with weapons, and the dwellings with all kinds of vessels. Almost every house bears

the trade-sign of its inmate, every public building the inscription of its founder. Vessels for the temples, bath utensils, kitchen implements, articles of the toilette—all stand undisturbed in their places; an altar of Isis, indeed, is still strewn with the remains of its last half-burnt sacrifice. Even the (about) six hundred skeletons, which at present have been excavated, appear to be animated ghosts. Here stands a sentinel, still decked with helmet and armour, and with a lance in his right hand; there in the Temple of Isis the skeleton of an idolatrous priest is holding valuable vessels for the sacrifices; a second, an axe (such as was used in the greatest need), and a third is before a table, upon which lie the remains of his parting meal amongst bones of fowls, still with a knife in his hand; lastly, most are laden with bunches of keys and precious objects. The life of the ancients is, as by magic, again restored, optically, strikingly, wonderfully. And yet the whole place is so fearfully unhomely,—a gigantic skeleton itself, a habitation of death. Were it but temporal death, that there stares at us! But quite another death affects the Christian visitor with horror. The chain on the house-door, to which the watching slave lay fastened, like a dog; the skeletons of gladiators in the amphi-

theatre, from which the thunder and burning lava of Vesuvius had suddenly scared away the spectators ; the horrid idols round about, but particularly the revolting pictures and marks of demoralization on the walls of the streets, temples and chambers, in the graves even of the dead, make one's soul shudder.

Between Pompeii and the Catacombs of Rome what a contrast ! There, darkness and comfortless doubt ; here, the joyful light of faith and hope of heaven ; there, cruelty and vice ; here, only blossoms of the purest love and virtue ; there, in the city of the living, only spiritual death ; here, in the city of the dead, only celestial life ! When some years ago we were wandering through Pompeii's desolate streets, how we should have breathed again, if but one soft ray of Christian light had broken through the dense night ! But a volcano buried the town, together with all its sodomitical horrors, in the year 79, according to our reckoning of time, so that traces of the apostolic preaching could not be hoped for.

But yet they have in the meanwhile been found. Very lately a building has been dug out, that bears on the outside quite a puzzling inscription. But on the walls of the inner saloon the following scoffing remarks have been

discovered amongst other *graphiti*, (scribblings :) “A mule teaches gnats here!” “Sweet greeting from the liar, oh friend of truth!” “Ever sweet greeting from the liar!” And then two important words, which diffuse a light over those sarcasms, as over the destination of the building: “AVDI CHRISTIANOS,” “hear what the Christians teach!” According to de Rossi’s supposition, we are in an assembly-place of the Christians. The apostles were wont, on their arrival in a town, to seek first the Synagogue, and then to enter an inn or lodging, where they received and instructed those eager for salvation. Such a place the above building must have been. The existence of a Jews’ Synagogue is confirmed by an inscription. From the Acts of the Apostles, xxviii. 14, it is equally evident, that Paul, who in the year 61 landed as prisoner in the neighbouring sea-port town of Puteoli, here discovered a community of Christians, with whom he spent seven days. Did the community at Pompeii already exist then? and was it permitted the Apostle to see and comfort it? We know not. We can only assume with probability this much, that the persecution of Nero (67) struck them, and that the remarkable place of assembly, where the glad tidings had sounded, mortal souls been won, perhaps the chaste

Lamb offered up on the altar, afterwards became an object of scorn to the heathen, who then wrote on its inside walls those stinging satires, and on the outer wall the ironical challenge : "This is no place for idlers ; pass by loiterer !".

What significance a few words, written by an enemy's hand, gain for Christian knowledge of antiquity ! And what would we give for a single word from a Christian hand ! Well, enter the sanctuary of the Catacombs, and contemplate their riches in records, monuments, and remembrances of the venerable Christian epoch. Already they have produced for us in irresistible testimonies a great portion of the Catholic faith, and permitted us to glance into the public life of the Church, as into the most tender relations of the Christian community. In the following pages they will conduct us into a new and indeed more hidden precinct of the Faith, and bring thereto, as much as is possible from discoveries made till now, their testimony for a certain conclusion. We will then seek in this venerable treasury the seven-branched candlestick, which burns before the Holy of Holies of the new covenant. In consideration of the preponderating sepulchral nature of the monuments in the Catacombs, this is a bold undertaking. That many of the relations which the Catholic Faith

determines between the living and the departed, would in them be made known, was to be expected. But now the silent city of the dead shall tell of mysteries of the Faith, which only concern the living; which, besides, in those primitive times, in order not to be desecrated, were concealed in the most profound silence, and had fled to the obscurity of the discipline of the *Arcana*.* Under circumstances of such a kind, to expect in the Catacombs formal and all-comprehensive dogmatic proofs, together with an exposition of the common faith of the ancient Christians, were at the least indiscreet. We must rather thankfully greet each slight allusion to one dogma. If the reader will keep this point of view in his mind, then we venture to promise him, that his expectations will be more than satisfied.

I.—*The holy Sacraments.*

The Christian Church is threefold as to her division of members. As her Bridegroom in the Canticles (v. 15), her "form is as of Libanus." The mountain's silvery peak glitters in the pure air of the heavens; its rocky foot rests in fiery depths, and its declivities, watered by fountains from on high, are adorned with cedars,

* *Secrets.*

meadows, and smiling fruit-gardens. The sunshine of heaven also plays round about the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, with the triumphant Blessed; at their feet also flaming valleys open themselves for the still suffering children; and their lap upon earth is decked with the fruit-gardens of the Church Militant, which receive all blessings of grace from above, and lovingly guide them down to the depths of the place of purification. This is nearly the nature of the Church and her bond of blessings, as we have recognised her in the light of old Christian monuments. In a similar manner let us now enter upon inquiries respecting the means of grace in the Church, or the holy Sacraments. That their number was as well known, as, on the other hand, like the Sacraments themselves, that it was kept secret, has, indeed, never been earnestly doubted. This supposition was raised to a certainty by the learned researches of Shelstrate. The seven streams, therefore, which spring from the rock (Christ or Peter), the seven branches of the sacred candlestick, the seven stars which hover over the head of the Good Shepherd on a lamp of terra-cotta, and similar seven-fold symbols, may have typified to the initiated the sacred number of the Sacraments, as well as the gifts

of the Holy Ghost. Let us, after this notice, begin with the first and most necessary of the holy Sacraments.

II.—*Baptism.*

The entrance into the Church Militant is the type of the entrance into the Church Triumphant. The former as the latter, baptism as well as death, are, in the old ecclesiastical language, birth-day festivals. This relationship at once justifies the conjecture that the Catacombs, as resting-places of the Christian dead, will also bear witness for baptism. One other circumstance is associated to this. The Roman Necropolis was not exclusively destined to harbour the dead; it served the first Christians as a place of worship, that is to say, it was not only God's acre, in whose bosom slumbered the seed of the future Resurrection; but it was also God's garden, in the beds of which the Church reared her vernal buds. Should not traces be found there of the holy care and solicitude, which were devoted to the spiritual after-growth, the new shoots? We know already that here and there stood strictly separated chambers, in connection with the crypts or chapels by means of openings for

sound, and that in them, besides penitents, the catechumens (called also "God's pupils" and "novices") under the care of a "master" attended a portion of the Divine Service. But there have also been found rooms in the Catacombs, which, one can scarcely longer doubt, were applied for the instruction of Catechumens, i.e., that they were ancient Christian schools for catechism. They are quite simple—not once cemented grave or rock chambers—with-out altar, pictures, inscription, or symbol. Only some niches, blackened with soot, still testify of the lamps which here were burning at an assembly. What more clearly marks them is the stone bench running round on three sides, as seats for the listeners, and near the entrance an arm-chair, hewn out of the rock. When two such chairs are in a chamber, the room served probably for female catechumens, for whom the ancient Church discipline required, besides the "Master," the presence of a second cleric, or an elderly Christian matron. Let us pass from the preparation to the act of baptism itself. That this was undertaken at times in the Catacombs, is incontestable. The Ostrian cemetery, a branch of the venerable Catacomb of St. Agnes, bears in the old reports of pilgrims the name of "the fountains of St.

Peter," or "where Peter was wont to baptize." It is the Catacomb in which the holy Martyrs, Papias, Maurus, and Emerentiana were buried. Traces also of subterraneous baptismal-wells have been discovered. The most perfect received, and apparently still used in the later peaceful times of the Church, is the noted water-basin in the Catacomb of Pontianus, the painted ornament of which (the principal picture represents the baptism of the Saviour in the Jordan) permits no doubt as to its object. The basin is still fed by a subterranean little brook, and changes its depth according to the height of water of the Tiber. In it, as the whole work shows, the Sacrament was administered by means of immersion. Besides this mode of baptizing, which hitherto was alone customary in the primitive Church, there was in Rome also the infusion of water, as newly discovered pictures on walls and baptismal pitchers themselves irresistibly prove; and indeed not merely for the sick and in exceptional cases; perhaps not less equally in practice than immersion. Many wall-paintings of the third century urge to this conclusion, unmistakably representing the act of baptism under the former mode. There has even been a bronze vessel received, with representations of

the evangelical catcher of fish, the recognised symbol of baptism; also on a very old fresco (over the cemetery of Cyriaca), St. Lawrence is pouring water over the head of Romanus by means of a baptismal-pitcher.

III.

That baptism in the view of the ancient Church is not a "mere ceremony," not a "mere outward image or sign of grace," but an actual dispensing of graces, is obvious at once from the formulæ of the Arcana, by which it was denoted on the grave-stones. They here say, "the departed, acquired, obtained, received grace." **GRATIAM.** Still more clearly does the Ark betray this, the customary emblem of baptism. It symbolizes according to the Apostle Peter, (1 Peter iii. 20), the deliverance from perdition, effected by baptism, as the dove with the olive-branch does the admission into the peace of God and the Church through the Holy Ghost. This is further expressed by the scene in which Peter (in the form of Moses) elicits the water of grace from the rock Christ, and causes it to flow over the desert (the heathen); sometimes also without concealment over the head of a man. It represents the

purification and sanctifying refreshment, which baptism is the means of conveying to the sinful soul. The opened rock is the opened side of Christ, whence the Eucharistic Blood, and the sanctifying water of baptism spring forth in a manner full of mystery. Further, baptism effects, according to the mode of expression in holy Scripture, the death of the old man and the spiritual regeneration to a new life, together with a right to heaven. This conception finds its expression in the manifold sculptures and symbols, which represent the glorious resurrection of our Lord. Many grave-stones too point to this, sometimes more and sometimes less clearly. Thus the beautiful inscription : "Here rests Fortunatian, who, regenerated in the heavenly water, lives for ever in peace." **COELESTI RENATVS AQVA VIVIT IN (œcum.)** This spiritual transformation by baptism the ancient Church denotes preferably as "illumination," or the infusion of heavenly light. As proof, we cite one out of many examples : "Here slumbers Achillia, the but recently illuminated ; she lived one year and three months." **NEOΦΩΤΙCTOC.*** At the risk of anticipating

* That the infusion of the three theological virtues was also recognised as an effect of baptism, is apparent from the pious custom of subjoining them as names for the baptized. Thus in

ourselves, we must already make mention here of an important symbol, under which the baptized Christian is frequently represented in the Catacombs. It is the hieroglyphic of the fish. Sometimes we simply see the fish alone; sometimes an Apostle is drawing it out of the water, or holds it caught on the hook, or in a net. The meaning is at hand, "As the fish lives by water, so the Christian lives by baptism." According to the view of many of the Fathers, it is exactly on this account that they are Galilean fishermen, whom Christ makes Apostles, i. e. "fishers of men." A still deeper sense, however, lies in the picture. Christ Himself is, as we shall see, the divine fish, with whom Christians are united in baptism as little fish. "We put on Christ; we are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii.) This the Fathers also expressed under the cloak of the discipline of the Arcana: "We are little fish according to our 'Fish' Jesus Christ," IXΟΥΣ. "We are little

two different Catacombs, on the Aurelian and Appian Ways, there were two celebrated families of martyrs deposited, both consisting of a mother and three daughters. The mother of the one was called Sophia, her daughters Pistis, Elpis and Agape,—the mother of the other Sapientia, and her daughters Fides, Spes and Caritas. In both, therefore, the mother was named in sense and symbol, "Wisdom;" the children, "Faith," "Hope" and "Charity."

fish, born in water, and only saved by its healing property." (Tertullian.) "Christ the Fish (*piscis*) descending into the spring, it becomes a saving fish- (i.e. baptismal-) fountain, *piscina*" (St. Optatus).* "The fish sanctifies the fish," ("*piscis consecrat pisces*,") i. e. Christ sanctifies the baptized, changes and transforms them into Himself, makes them His members and children. From this idea, too, proceeds the most customary designation of the baptized, *neophytus*, i. e. "newly-planted," or "implanted in Christ." Thus a celebrated sarcophagus bears the inscription: "Junius Bassius went to God as a Neophyte." **NEOFITVS IIT AD DEVVM.** Another expression for baptism, *benedictus*, "blessed," comprises all the effects of this Sacrament. "Leontius, blessed man, mayest thou live for ever (in God)." "She was a holy soul, blessed, as was her name." **ANIMA SANCTA CATA NOMEN BENEDICTA.** "Mayest thou, blessed by (bishop or priest) Sæcularis, live!" These words stand upon a gold enamelled glass, over the image of a neophyte in the white baptismal dress, "Pancratius, thou blessed one." **PANCRATI BENEDICTE.** At the end of this in-

* The baptismal well in the earliest times bore the name, as is known, of fish-reservoir, *piscina*, besides the denotations *baptisterium*, *Jordanes*, *illuminatorium*, &c.

scription an anchor is engraved, and a little bird carrying a bunch of grapes in its bill; which symbolism, in connection with the words, avers, "thy soul, Pancratius, has by baptism and the Eucharist won the hope of salvation."

IV.

If baptism saves from destruction, death, and darkness, it is, therefore, indispensable to salvation. Besides the aforesaid, the solicitude of the first Christians in not allowing children and dying persons to be deprived of holy baptism witnesses for this conception. Thus we read: "Florentin places this inscription to his son Apronian, who lived 1 year, 9 months, 5 days and.....departed from this life as a believer."

VR FIDELIS. "To his most sweet son Severus, his father Laurentius; being 4 years, 8 months, and 5 days old, he was on the 7th January fetched by the angels," ACCERSITVS AB ANGELIS, which is safely conclusive of baptism having been received. Another memorial tablet makes mention of a dead child: "He received (baptism) in his second or third year." BIMVS TRIMVS CONSECVTVS EST. A grave-stone, which Murcius Verinus erected to his two little

daughters, one of whom died at twelve, the other at eight years of age, concludes with the words: "Verina received (baptism) at 10 months old. Floriana at the age of 12 months."

PERCEPIT M. X ET M. XII. Like the baptism of children, baptism on the deathbed is also richly attested. A grave-tablet honours the memory of "Marcian, well-deserving son in Jesus Christ our Lord, who, at the age of 12 years received on the 21 Sept. the grace of our Lord, and on the 22 Sept. died: mayest thou live amongst the saints!" GRATIAM ACCEPIT D. N.—VIBAS INTER SANCTOS IHA (?). Another avers: "Posthumius Eutherion, a believer: he received holy grace on the eve of his birth- (*i.e.* death) day... he lived 6 years: his soul is with the Saints at peace." GRATIA SANCTA CONSECVTVS. At the beginning of the six lines of this inscription are the letters IX@YCN, *i.e.*, "the Fish conquers," or, "the baptized boy has become a booty of victory for Christ." Thus much concerning the sacrament of baptism. In the course of these pages there will yet fall many rays of light on the same. But the aforesaid ought to perfectly suffice to mark the doctrine of the sixteenth century, according to which the baptized "remains a sinner to the grave," as irreconcileable with the primitive Christian one.

V.—*Confirmation.*

Let us place next in order to baptism the Sacrament of Confirmation. In the early days of the Church it bore the names "seal," or, "the sealing," "royal unction," or simply, "sign of Christ," because the Bishop impressed with unction on the forehead of the Christian warrior the royal sign of the cross; as it were, the soldier's mark, seal, and buckler. This sealing with holy chrism, already called "confirmation" in the 4th century, "fortification," or "equipment," was in those times, even in little children, administered immediately after baptism, and was in a measure the completion of the same. The Holy Ghost descended also upon Jesus, just after baptism, in the form of a dove. The picture of the dove was, too, the solemn symbol of the confirmed, i.e., of those converted into the heavenly dove, or of the soul vivified and filled with the Holy Ghost, and it greets us as such thus friendly from a thousand grave-stones. Let us observe the consequence of this ancient Christian symbolism. The baptized becomes the bearer of Christ, the Divine Fish, a little fish; the confirmed, resembling, as bearer

of the Holy Ghost, the Divine Dove, a little dove, or a light-winged happy little bird. In the inscriptions the symbolical veil is sometimes stripped off, and the Christian soul itself is called, from the sacramental indwelling of the Holy Spirit, "spirit," "holy spirit," "holy spirit of God," or, "of the Lord." But one example, (from the year 269): "This stone Leuces places to Levera, her dearly-loved daughter and thy (*i.e.* her) holy spirit." **SPIRITO SANCTO TVO.** Besides this, no express mention of holy confirmation in the grave-inscriptions has been discovered till now. Two only have been met with by us, which perhaps contain allusions. One, probably from the first century, says in Greek words: "Here rests the flesh of Julia Evarista, most beloved of God: but her soul, renewed by the Spirit of Christ, was admitted in angels' raiment into the heavenly kingdom of Christ with the Saints." The other is placed in memory of a married couple, and thus concludes: "The priest of God, Probianus, baptized and anointed them." **LAVIT ET VNXIT.** For a more precise indication, however, we must thank the chisel of the ancient Christian sculptor who executed the already-mentioned splendid sarcophagus of Junius Bassus. Christ appears thereon in several



scenes represented as a lamb, which is grasping a staff with the right foot. Therewith it strikes first (as Moses) on the rock, then touches the head of a smaller lamb, upon which rays of light are falling from a dove, and lastly, loaves and fishes. That the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, are here mystically represented, is undoubted. The circumstance that the three sacraments were administered at the same time to baptized, especially to grown people, makes the supposition clear, that the secret formula, "he acquired," "obtained," "received," which we so frequently meet on the grave-stones, commonly attests the reception of the three sacraments mentioned. Let us add to this, in conclusion, an invaluable document, already published by us earlier in "Stimmen aus Rom."* It endures, in a memorial-tablet of the fourth century, the re-discovery of which is De Rossi's merit. It has conjecturally for author the holy Pope Damasus, and formerly adorned in the ancient Vatican Basilica a place near a baptismal well, where the Pope used to confirm the baptized. It reads thus:—

* "Voices from Rome."

"Here the Shepherd supreme seals the sheep,
From all guilt washed pure by the stream!
Who art born, in the wave, come to Him,
Who has gifts to dispense, full of grace.
By the cross on thy brow fly the storms
Of the sea of the world, all enrag'd,
Better warned of the strife by this spot!"

These few indications, joined to the fact that the false teachers of the first centuries made war against the Church on account of holy confirmation, assign the proper position to those who are not afraid to wickedly call this wonderful armour of the Holy Ghost, which equipped the first Christians as heroes of the faith, courageous to the death, "apish foolery," "lying gossip," and, "an invention of the Council of Lyons." (A.D. 1245.)

VI.—*Extreme Unction.*

As the "royal anointing" nerves to the battle of life, so the "anointing of the sick," or Extreme Unction, steels to the death-struggle. The infant-Church placed it in a similar relation to penance, *i.e.*, to confession on the deathbed, as it did confirmation to baptism. So far as is known to us, the Catacombs have until now been silent respecting Extreme Unction. In expectation of more decisive discoveries, we will be

contented to mention one Christian antiquity, which is considered only by some Archæologists as belonging hereto, but which is, however, of the highest importance. There has been found there a little box, with a tablet of gold, which, probably executed in the second century, bears the following Greek inscription, distributed on both sides: "Oh, Cross, purify me! I adjure thee, Satan, (EXOPKIZΩ CE) that thou nevermore leave thy place in the name of the Lord, the living God. Thus recite in the dwelling of her whom I have anointed." ΕΠΙΚΕXPPIKA. Whether the concluding word, as is assumed, refers to Extreme Unction, and that the anointing priest had left behind him the adjuration formula, for the protection and comfort of a sick woman, who then caused it to be engraved in the costly tablet, may be left undecided. Besides this, the remarkable inscription also attests in such a striking way the primitive Christian custom of exorcism, on the one hand, and, indeed, in the still customary form, as, on the other, the faith in the power of the cross against Satan, that it must be reckoned amongst the most precious traditions of Christian antiquity.

VII.—*Holy Order.*

Let us apply ourselves to the sacrament which gives to the house of God upon earth its pillars and columns; to the people of God its shepherds and mediators—Holy Order. In order to avoid repetitions, we beg the reader to recall to memory what we have said concerning the division, willed by God, of the Church into rulers and subjects, and to add, as supplement, an important inscription of the third century. It is executed by the Deacon Aurelius Saturninus for his own grave, and concludes with the following impressive words: “I pray and beseech all the clergy, and the whole brotherhood, that no one else shall on any account be buried in this tomb.” OMNEM CLERVM ET CVNCTAM FRATERNITATEM. As here the clergy, the collective body of the Church-servants and spiritual governors, God’s particular heritage and portion, is clearly and decidedly distinguished as a state from the flock of believers, so another epigraphical monument expresses the dignity of the office. It is the celebrated memorial tablet composed by St. Damasus, which De Rossi has discovered in the Papal grave-chamber, in the

centre of the Catacomb of Callistus, and happily put together from 112 fragments of marble. It begins with the verses :—

Just here, if you ask, sleeps a crowd of companions devout.
 This City of graves hides the Saints so renowned in the world,
 Whose souls, pure as snow, long have sped to the halls full of light,
 Where Christ ever dwells, as a King full of love and delight.
 The friends of the Pope slumber here by the spoils of their strife,
 A troop of brave men, noble guards round the altars of Christ.

HIC . NVMERVS . PROCERV M . SERVAT . QVI
 ALTARIA . CHRISTI.

The monuments of the Catacombs however do not pause at these general denotations : in their inscriptions the whole sacred step-ladder of the Catholic hierarchy confronts us. We see there first, immediately from the first century onwards, in strict precedence of rank, the bishop, presbyter and deacon. EPISCOPVS, PRESBYTER, DIACONVS. When single monuments simply call the bishop priest, SACERDOS, this means as much as first, highest, most distinguished priest, and has its foundation in the old ecclesiastical custom, according to which, as a rule, the bishop, and only in case of hindrance the presbyter, offered up the Holy Sacrifice. The Greek title Deacon is replaced sometimes by the Latin interpretation MINISTRA-

TOR, *i. e.* server, with the addition however of CHRISTIANVS, "christian server," as distinction from the similarly named inferior altar-servers of the heathen. After these three most ancient and primitive grades, the cemetery-inscriptions numerously named from the end of the second century onwards, "reader," "exorcist," and "digger," LECTOR, EXORCISTA, POSSOR, if otherwise the latter count as clerics. Much seldom, and first at the commencement of the fourth century, "sub-deacon," "acolyte," ACOLVTVS, and "door-keeper," OSTIARIVS, meet us. For example's sake, we cite the following grave-writings referring to earlier ones. "Here rests in peace the lector Ulpius, 20 years old." "Cinnamius Opas, lector of the parish-title of Fasziola, a friend of the poor." "(Here rests) Macedonius, exorcist of the Catholic (Church)." "The grave-place of the Acolyte Romanus." "At this holy place rests the venerable man Januarius, the deacon, who for 47 years administered the diaconal office." MINISTRAVIT IN DIAC. OFFIC. "(The resting-place) of the presbyter and doctor Dionys." In explanation of this tablet, we must observe, that in times of persecution, bishops, priests, and deacons, like the present Catholic missionaries, frequently practised the surgical art.

Thus the whole Catholic hierarchy of holy order unfolds itself before our eyes in the Catacombs,—that wonderful spiritual organization which stands round the throne of the Eucharistic Lamb, as the angelic hierarchy does round that of the glorified. Its dignity, its elevation and mission are, as has been before pointed out, conferred on it by Christ. Its holy power and plenipotence extend to the actual and mystical Body of the Lord; i.e. it concentrates itself in the sacerdotal guarding of the altar, and the faithful people,* and shines

* That also the gradations of the ecclesiastical governing power are illuminated by a new light from the ancient Christian monuments, is partly evident from our earlier explanations respecting the primacy. Here, yet some notices which progressing discoveries promise ever more to unroll to a perfect system. Already the fundamental features of the administrative management of the ancient Church of Rome lie before us. We know from monuments and inscriptions, that Rome in the third century had twenty-five "titles," or parish- and Catacomb-districts, and that in each of the same, on an average, two priests, or a "titular-priest" or pastor, and a subordinate *socius*, "companion," or vicar, officiated; the former attended to the service in the town "Dominicum" (Basilica or Church), the latter that in the Catacomb. Hence in an inscription we read: "Alexius and Capriola, erected for themselves (this grave-place) in their life-times, with the approbation of the presbyters, Archelaus and Dulcitus"—these are the two priests of the title, to whom belonged the jurisdiction over the cemetery concerned. We learn further that, besides the twenty-five Roman parishes, one existed, which, together with the cemetery belonging thereto, the Pope had reserved to himself. The papal

forth in particular from the figurative representations of the holy Sacraments of the Altar and of penance. Even the virginity suitable to an angel's office, the celibacy, adorning like a halo the Catholic priesthood, which people have been pleased to call an innovation and a "violation of duty against God and His gospel," is, in the higher grades at least, astonishingly confirmed by the ancient Christian grave-monuments. To our knowledge there has not been discovered up to the present time a single cemetery inscription of a presbyter,—of the Bishops of Rome, i. e. the Popes, this is a matter of course,—which contained the slightest token of marriage, whilst on the other hand, consorts were constantly in the habit of dedicating memorial inscriptions to one another.

We have, in short, discovered out of old

Catacomb, naturally at once, as such, the most eminent of all, was from the end of the second century in that of Calistus. The Pope allowed it to be administered by his (Arch)-deacon. For this too an epigraphical witness is at hand. In a crypt of that Catacomb, fragments of a marble (Altar or choir) rail have been drawn forth from the rubbish, and with them the consecration document of the crypt, which begins with the following words: "This double Chapel, together with the Arcosolia and luminary, with approbation of his Pope Marcellinus Severus, his deacon caused to be erected, as slumbering-place for himself and his relations, (first of all for his virgin sister dedicated to God.)"
IUSSV P.P. SVI MARCELLINI DIACONVS ISTE FECIT.

Christian monuments, the hierarchical grades of ordination and its effects of grace. If, besides this, the act of sacerdotal consecration, i. e. the actual administration of the Sacrament, could be proved by a monumental witness, the inquiry, it strikes us, would be satisfactorily concluded. This witness is in fact to hand, and strengthened by De Rossi's authority, by whom we were led to a more attentive observation of the same. In a crypt of the ruinous Catacomb of St. Hermes, there is amongst other biblical scenes a picture, the basis of which rests apparently on an action conceived from clerical life. A youth in a long *tunica* (like the alb), and in a praying posture, is turned with his face towards the people. Before him stands a raised seat (*Cathedra*), down from which an older figure is spreading out his arms over the youth. The drapery, the attitude and entire grouping make it more than probable that we have before us here the sacramental laying on of hands, or ordination of a cleric by the Bishop. In what nearer relation the picture stands to the tomb it adorns, and which indeed covers the consecrated cleric, as also to the biblical scenes and types of Sacraments placed near it, the competent pen of De Rossi will detail in the continuation of his "*Roma Sotterranea*."

VIII.—*Marriage.*

Christianity aims at the transformation of the natural man into the supernatural, the elevation of the whole being into a higher, celestial sphere. The Church therefore draws in particular the family, the microcosm of the state and of society, into the light and warm sphere of redeeming grace. If the same is to be renewed, its root, its source—marriage—must before all be ennobled, sanctified, i.e. elevated from the mere natural sphere into the supernatural. This takes place through the Sacrament of Marriage. Christ, to make use of an ancient Christian symbol, touches marriage with the rod, and by the charm of His grace and might it is transformed. It is now compassed about by a halo of sanctity; overshadowed by the wings of the Holy Ghost; a mirror and image of the mystical union of Christ with His immaculate Bride, the Church. This is the Christian and Catholic view, wherewith a conception, according to which “marriage is as little a Sacrament as the business of husbandry, or the exercise of the barber’s craft” (Calvin) is certainly contrasted. That the latter conception, which the unchristianized modern state

has also made its own, is strange to the Christian primitive Church, a mere superficial glance at her monuments proves to the examining observer. "The departed (he or she) lived with me in holy matrimony," "in wonderful chastity, innocence, wisdom and fidelity," "a pattern of purity," "full of holy modesty and love,"—these and similar witnesses meet us at every step. They express the supernatural holiness which, an effusion of the Sacrament, ennobles the tenderest unity of this life, and lends to it, as Tertullian says, alone true happiness. We find its relation to Christ and the Church still more decidedly indicated. Thus, a husband erects a grave-tablet "to his holy and most sweet consort in Christ, Felicitas, of inimitable industry and housewifely integrity." Another, Alexander by name, certifies of his "most sweet wife Pudicissima, the venerable and in seldom degree chaste wife;" that "she, as a believer (i.e. Christian, QVA FIDELIS) never could have discord with him." Most luminously stand forth the sanctity and glorification of marriage in Christ, and therewith the effects of grace of the Sacrament, on the enamelled drinking cups, which were made use of in the religious love-feast at wedding festivals. They mostly bear the device, "May

ye live in God!" and represent the betrothed with the right hands joined, between them, either a symbol of Christ, or the God-Man Himself crowning them. On such a glass the couple reach each other the hand over an altar-like pillar adorned with precious stones, emblem of the Church, whilst also here the Saviour, hovering over the pillar, is placing a wreath on bride and bridegroom. The meaning cannot be doubted. To the Christians of primitive times marriage is a "Sacrament in Christ and the Church," (Eph. v. 25, 32) i.e. a figure of the mysterious espousal of Christ with the Church; so that the husband reflects the excellency and resignation of the first, the wife the love and fidelity of the last. But in this picture of the wreath our Lord is placing on them the shining crown of this sacramental dignity and blessing. Other representations also express a sense similar in essence; when the couple, for example, are symbolized by two doves resting on olive branches or mutually drinking out of one cup. For here is seen the interposition of sacramental grace through the Holy Ghost, the Giver of peace and of purity of soul.

IX.—*Penance.*

With the Sacrament of Penance, which busies us next, the darkness of the Catacombs lightens itself more and more, till it brightens up, clear as day, in the Holy Eucharist. Confession has to do direct with the perverted heart, which has to be converted, *i.e.* turned from sinful delights to supernatural joy in God. That promises little to the natural man. Hence the constant attack on this Sacrament on the part of all false teachers. What to the children of light is a source of the richest blessing and comfort, is to those “a cruel law,” “a human invention.” Let us enquire what it was to the first-born Christians.

Into the fore-ground there steps the attractive picture of the Good Shepherd. It adorns almost all grave-chambers and galleries; greets us from numerous lamps, enamelled glasses, and sculptures; enlivens indeed many described grave-stones, on which the Foscor’s hand had roughly engraved it. Ordinarily in youthful form, clothed with a short under-garment, mantle, and half-boots, the shepherd appears sometimes only surrounded by sheep pasturing or following him, and then the relation between Christ and

the redeemed, between the spiritual shepherds and the laity, is merely represented in a general way. Oftener, indeed so often that it almost forms the rule, the shepherd is carrying a lamb or, as emblem of the sinner, a goat upon the shoulders back to the herd. Now in this most pleasing representation, besides the deliverance from pagan unbelief, is symbolized the pardon of the sinner by penance. Each stroke of the picture must have filled the heart of the Christians with wonder and thankful emotion. Sometimes the shepherd is most tenderly caressing the found sheep, joyfully slung round his neck; sometimes trustingly speaking to it, whilst it bleats to him as if intelligent; sometimes he enlivens it by the playing of his shepherd's-pipe—all the expression only of paternal compassionate love, with which the Divine Shepherd (and His sacerdotal representative) takes up again the strayed lamb, teaches, comforts, and encourages it. And as a solemn protest against the heretical Montanists, who limit the loosing-power of the Church, and wish to know re-admittance denied to certain heavy sinners; and further, as witness that "there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance," the Good Shepherd

appears sometimes, not only with a goat on His shoulders, but also with one at His right hand, whilst the (innocent) sheep stands on His left. The place of honour is conceded to the former, just as the father caused an entertainment to be prepared for the lost son, and not for the elder brothers left behind. Another representation in the Catacomb of Callistus lays claim still more vigorously to our attention. We here see how an apostle leads to the Good Shepherd (Christ) a lamb, which the latter takes on His shoulders, and prepares to carry to Him others standing in the back-ground of the picture, amongst which those willingly listening to the Apostle are being watered with a rain of grace. The Apostles and their successors in the Church it is, therefore, who win back to the Divine Shepherd of souls the lost lambs, and in the Sacrament of Penance convey to them the dew of grace, reconciliation, and holiness, according to the command of our Lord : " Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins ye forgive," &c. &c. (John xx. 23.) If the Good Shepherd represents surpassingly the divine favour and compassion, so does another picture still further exhibit the effects of grace of the Sacrament : we mean the ever-recurring representation of the paralytic, who is taking up his bed, or

being healed by Christ, (denoted as Peter,) by touching with the staff. The healing words directed to the sick man, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee," (Luke v. 20,) put the mystical signification of the miracle beyond doubt. The corporal healing is the emblem of spiritual healing ; the rising up from the bed the symbol of the resurrection of the soul ; the often naked representation of the healed a hint, that penance is the means of a spiritual regeneration. Highly worthy of remark is too the circumstance, that the healing of the paralytic in the ancient Christian sculptures is, as a rule, brought into connection with one of the eucharistical scenes ; for example, the miraculous increase of the loaves, or the marriage in Cana ; just as now, according to the Catholic view and practice, the sacraments of penance and of the altar, or confession and communion, are conditional upon and complete each other. Lastly, the Catacombs do not entirely deny their testimony to the most humiliating act of penance, auricular confession. This, as is known, before the introduction of our confessionals, *i.e.* before the twelfth century, was done in the neighbourhood of the altar, where the priest occupied a seat, whilst the person confessing either stood or likewise sat. Now in the cemetery of St.

Agnes in 1842, a chapel has been discovered with two solid stone seats, the peculiar position of which precludes the accepting them as ecclesiastical seats of honour. Archæologists perceive in them with certainty, following the celebrated F. Marchi, monumental witnesses for the practice of private confession in the primitive Roman Church. Even so the traces of the ancient Christian institution of penance, which are not only to be recognised in the separation from divine service, but also in memorable epigraphical witnesses of the assurance of "peace," i.e. of absolution in the hour of death, distinctly confirm the Catholic doctrine of satisfaction. What wonder if Melancthon, full of indignation, calls the humiliations of the apostolic penitential discipline, as he was unable to deny it, "an empty show, procreated from Jewish and Pagan belief!"

X.—*The Symbol of the Fish.*

We have arrived at the holy Eucharist, the sublimest of Sacraments. Full of majesty it radiates and rules on the Christian firmament of grace, and gives to the remaining Sacraments, as the sun to the planets, light and heavenly direction. To this magical star, a

preliminary inquiry, the elucidation of the already mentioned symbolical fish, shall prepare us the way. We do not here enter into the history of the creation, nor into the fact that fish were not struck by the curse of the flood. We also lay no weight thereto, that fish were held by the Israelites as their peculiar constellation, and adorned their signet rings. Of importance for us, however, is the fish which in the life of Tobias plays so important a roll, and which, after the most ancient fathers, points typically to Christ. That patriarch then drew by command of the angel a mighty fish to the shore, which, on the one hand, possessed the miraculous power of freeing from the devil and blindness, on the other, promised by its flesh nourishment for the journey. The relation to the two fundamental mysteries of Christianity, Baptism and the Eucharist, comes into view at once. The former saves from the devil's night and "illuminates," the latter nourishes on the pilgrimage through the earthly life.* Another source of the symbol of the fish originates from the celebrated Sibylline prophecy of the Mes-

* That Raphael, in his splendid picture of the Madonna at the Escorial, in which Tobias is handing the Divine Child a fish, had this ancient Christian symbolism in view, is indeed scarcely doubtful.



siah, the verses of which commence with the letters of the word IXΩYC “fish.” The Sibyls appeared to the ancient Christians, who therefore were mockingly also called “Sibyllists,” as divinely illuminated stars, sent to make bright the night of the heathen, and to point to the Messiah, and their books were so dexterously interpreted by apologists in proof of Christian doctrine, that the Romans set the punishment of death on the reading of them. But what in the eyes of the Christians rightly lent importance to the acrostic, was the circumstance that the initial letters I. X. Ω. Y. C. made up complete to five Greek words, contained the summary of the Christian faith: “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.” From this the fish derived its conventional meaning and became the hieroglyphic for Christ the Son of God and Saviour. As the most recent discoveries prove, this symbol takes its rise in the primitive age of the apostles, then remains through three centuries an *arcana-sign*, and vanishes about the middle of the fourth century. If the fish occurs on later monuments, it but serves more as a traditional ornament, or as an allegory of the evangelical catching of fish, but not as a symbol of belief. It is no more perceived upon any grave of the fifth and sixth centuries,

whilst over a hundred Roman inscriptions out of the ages of persecution bear it. The estimation of the age of the Christian inscriptions is the immortal merit of De Rossi, who has succeeded in obtaining safe criteria and rules for the chronology of the same. Thus, inscriptions without declaration of time fall into the first three centuries; those provided with the consular date in the peaceful ages of the Church. Now of the inscriptions which bear the fish-symbol, a single one only is dated, and even this one goes back to the year 284. No less do the *sigilla d. m.* i.e. "to the subterranean gods holy," sometimes applied, testify for their great age,—a heathen formula, which only occurs on the oldest cemeterial inscriptions, and is mostly to be traced to the heathen magazine in which the slabs were bought, sometimes to the ignorance of a Christian fossor. One example for the last the remarkable epitaph of a certain Licinius gives, above which is the word IXΩYC, "Fish," then d. m.; below that an anchor, and on both sides of this last a fish with the important inscription, "fish of the living," IXΩYC ΖΩΝΤΩΝ. The antiquity of the hieroglyphic of the fish receives further confirmation through the place of discovery of the inscriptions concerned being

in the oldest Catacombs; through the beauty and form of their letters; through the ancient nomenclature, classical simplicity and brevity of expression,* as also through the rarity of the monogram, which came into vogue about the year 250, but first under Constantine, after 312, was generally customary on grave-stones. What we have said of the grave-inscriptions, has application also to the seals and gems, about fifty in number, with the said symbol. They bear either only the fish (sometimes explained by the word "fish," "Jesus," or "Christ"), or near the same another symbol of Christ or the Church. One gem full of meaning bears a throne, upon which is the word IX@YC, "fish." Of the lamps only those of terra-cotta found in the Catacombs, as only the oldest sarcophagi, have the mystical fish. Lastly, the drinking-glasses of the third and fourth centuries show the fish usually in combination with biblical scenes. Thus, once, instead of Jonas, the fish (i.e. the risen Saviour) rests under the gourd-tree, and another time Christ bears, instead of Tobias, a fish in a net; manifestly the same

* Ex. gra.: "To our sweetest son Clodius, who after 32 months died. May thy spirit live in the good" (Saviour, which is expressed by the picture of the fish).

idea as when He carries the lamb on His shoulder.

Let us now approach nearer to the meaning of this mysterious symbol. About thirty grave slabs are merely provided with the picture of the fish, or with the mystical word IXΘΥC without other inscription. They announce the Divinity of Christ, wish the dear dead rest in Christ, and invoke for him Christ's favour at the judgment. On most other tablets, the fish is accompanied with by-symbols, four of which, the dove, the anchor, the ship, and particularly the loaves, betray a closer relation to the fish. The dove, generally with the olive-branch, associates itself to the fish on about twenty inscriptions. We know the dove already as the image of the soul vivified by the Holy Ghost, SPIRITVS; the olive-branch, as symbol of peace. Its union with the fish, consequently signifies thus much, "Thy soul lives, or may it live in peace (and) in Christ," or where the olive-branch is wanting: "May thy soul live in Christ." The anchor, similarly a biblical emblem (compare Hebrews vi. 18.), betokens hope; also connected with the fish, hope founded in Christ, as the hundred times occurring grave and seal device: "My hope in Christ," "in God," "in

the God Christ." SPES, or ΕΑΙΗΙC.* If the anchor has the form of the cross, there is expressed, "My hope rests in Christ the crucified Saviour," or, as in the inscription, "Sweet Longinus, live (an anchor-cross and fish follow) in hope on Christ, the crucified." The ship symbolizes the Church, the Ark of the New Covenant. Now if the fish bears the ship on its back, as is the case on two gems, and on one very old grave-stone, with the bare inscription CASSYS DOMINVS, it is thereby represented, that Christ carries His Church through the storms of ages and persecutions.

XI.—*The Eucharistic Fish in the crypt of Lucina.*

The fourth, and most significant symbol, which used to accompany the fish, is bread. It carries us to the goal of our inquiry, and first of all into the cemetery of Lucina. De Rossi has pointed out, that the foundation of this cemetery reaches back to the first century. He has further, out of hundreds of marble fragments, obtained the result that it was originally

* Some grave-tablets bear indeed only the initial letter E. i. e. "Hope."

the family vault of noble Christians, of Cecilians, Æmilians, Cornelians, and Pomponians. Hence he concludes that Lucina, the celebrated and illustrious contemporary of the Apostles, is conjecturally no other than Pomponia Græcina, the noble widow of Plautius, the conqueror of the Britons, (A. D. 43), whom Tacitus, as is known, mocked on account of her forty years "gloomy" life, and who, possibly, as a Christian bore the nickname of "Lucina" (illuminated). Let us now descend into the cemetery named after her. We follow this time the entrance-gallery, testifying of barbarian devastation, not in the direction of the tomb of the holy Pope Cornelius, but to the left towards a double chamber, whose structure and ornamentation strikingly remind one of Pompeii, and reach back to the classical epoch in art of the first century. For, its foundation is unhesitatingly to be ascribed to this age. In the first Cubiculum, exactly opposite the entrance, appears upon the wall between two broken-open grave-niches, the two-fold representation of a living fish, swimming upon the water, and bearing on its back a wicker basket, with five loaves, and a glass cup of red wine. We here have undeniably before us an eucharistic symbol, and indeed, the

arcana-dogma of the living presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine. What distinguishes this representation above all hitherto discovered, is, besides its apostolic antiquity, the weighty circumstance, that the fish is not (as in the later fish-cyclus, which was extended from gospel incidents) dead and prepared as food, but living, and in its original sibylline simplicity and signification; it appears, as St. Paulin also calls it, as the "true bread and the fish of the living water,"—in short, as Christ offering Himself in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass under the form of Bread and Wine, and as it were, carrying these forms. Just as on the Catholic altar, is here the form of bread and wine visible; invisible however, and hidden in the symbol the God-man. This monument of primitive belief on the eucharistic sacrifice is all the more precious, since it belies the assertion of adversaries, as just recently Renan's, that the symbol of the fish is taken from the consumed fish, and means merely "a cooked fish." The bread is not of the ordinary kind, (crossed on the top), but gray-ashen Syrian sacrifice-cakes, called among the Romans "mamphulæ," which the Easterns, particularly the Jews, prepared from the first-fruits. Also the use of willow-baskets, which the Hebrews,

Greeks, and Romans, made use of at the sacrifices, passed on to the Christians. The whole picture reminds of a remarkable passage of St. Jerome, who, in a letter to Rusticus, wherein he sums up a bishop's treasures, says, amongst other things : " No one is richer than he who bears the Body of our Lord in a willow-basket, and His Blood in a glass."

XII.—*In the Cemetery of Callistus.*

Let us leave the crypts of Lucina by means of the pilgrims'-steps which have led to it, in order to descend from another side into the "colossal district of subterranean Rome," as Marchi calls the Catacomb of Callistus. Let us follow, for a little space, the "Via Appia." The evening sun envelops, as it did eighteen hundred years ago, the lovely landscape in its magic veil, and suffuses Mount Albano, bordering the horizon, and its pearly jewels of glittering country houses, with gold and purple. But where is the proud monumental pomp of the heathen, which once adorned the "Queen of Roads"? The evening-red illuminates instead only naked ruins and crumbling masses of stone, which, phantom-like, tower up in melancholy amidst cypresses,—preachers of the vanity of

earthly splendour. How otherwise the Catacomb graves running below this world of ruins ! Unostentatious and concealed in earth's dusky bosom, they shine with incomparable splendour; for another celestial sun weaves round their monuments the bright lustre of true and never-perishing glory !

We direct our steps to the right of the Appian Way to a vineyard, and stand at the entrance of the cemetery, discovered by De Rossi in 1852. A temporary staircase of thirty-six steps, leads down below, where a gallery on the left meanders into a cubiculum. Let us enter with awe,—it is the grave-chamber of the holy Popes of the first century. Numerous pilgrims' mementos on the walls testify to the high reverence for this sanctuary. We still read, in Greek writing, the names on the grave-stones of the holy Popes Antherus, Fabian, Lucius, Eutychian, and venerate the traces of pillars of the altar, which formerly reared itself over the sarcophagus of the great Pope and Martyr, Sixtus II. A short, narrow passage in the left corner of the crypt, carries us into a second space, adorned with frescos, into the celebrated chapel of St. Cecilia. Over the now open grave, in which the holy Pope Urban once laid with his own hands (230) "the virginal

rose," still hovers the odour of her sanctity, and, not without pious emotion, we also pass this by. Yet one narrow street of graves, and our goal, a gallery, with six chambers in a row with each other, is reached. They are the so-called "chapels of the Sacrament," probably founded by St. Callistus himself (about A.D. 200). The humidity has for the greater part destroyed their roof-pictures, so that only here and there amongst birds, flowers, peacocks, and other symbols of Paradise, the half-obliterated picture of the Good Shepherd peeps forth. Fortunately, the wall-pictures have kept better. We perceive in the first chamber, first, three representations of baptism; Moses, (depicted as Peter,) who is striking water out of the rock; a priest in the pallium of the ascetics, who is baptizing a boy, and lastly, a man in sitting posture, who is drawing out of the water a little fish on a hook. This last representation has been spoken of by us earlier. Then follows the figure of a person teaching, likewise habited in the sacerdotal mantle; and lastly, upon the middle wall, two Eucharistic pictures. Let us contemplate the first. On a three-legged table for sacrifice are three loaves and one fish, and on the floor seven baskets filled with bread. The signification of the painting is not to be

mistaken. The table represents the Christian altar, the *mensa*; this was, if resting on an *arcosolium*, generally a transportable marble slab provided with brass rings (as two examples received prove), if, however, placed over a detached martyr's-coffin, a regular table supported by little columns (*columellæ*). Now, since the Christian painter represented the fish on the table by the side of the bread, what else could he wish to symbolize but the Divine "Fish" Christ, offered on the altar under the form of bread? Here, too, then, as in the picture in the crypt of Lucina, is strikingly expressed, on the one hand, the invisible (veiled in the fish) presence of the God-Man, on the other, the visible form, besides the place of the mysterious offering. But the place of offering is at the same time the table of the Lord, or the Eucharistic eating-table. To make this appear, seven baskets filled with bread stand round the table. They represent the seven baskets, which, after the miraculous multiplication of bread in the wilderness were filled with the fragments, and like the Gospel incident itself, have ever been viewed as a mystical type of Holy Communion. This portion of the Eucharistic dogma finds further expression in the second picture, executed immediately over the one just described. Here

seven men are lying round a table after the old Roman fashion, on which is only one fish in a dish, whilst the seven baskets of bread are again standing on the floor,—an allusion on the one hand to the multiplication of the loaves, on the other, to the meal at the lake of Tiberias, where the risen Saviour spake to the seven disciples, blessed with a rich draught of fishes: “Come and dine,” and thereupon “taketh bread and giveth them, and fish in like manner.” (John xxi.) The unanimous and striking testimonies of the Fathers leave no room for the slightest doubt as to the typical character of this scene.*

* Thus says St. Augustine: “Our Lord prepared for the seven disciples a meal of the fish, which lay before them on the glowing coals, and of bread. The roasted fish is Christ (“piscis assus Christus passus,” say the Fathers almost proverbially). He is also at the same time the Bread which came down from heaven; in Him the Church becomes incorporated for the sake of participation in eternal happiness.. so that all we who possess this hope, may have a share in so great a Sacrament, and enjoy the same happiness.” In another passage (in his “Confessions,”) the Saint speaks first of baptism as symbolized by the draught of fishes, by means of which “the merciful God seeks for men in many waters,” and hereupon of that “sacramental feast, at which is placed before us the fish, which, drawn forth out of the deep, (the Passion,) becomes food for the devout land” (i.e. the faithful). And again similarly in another place: “The land eats at the table the fish raised from the deep, which Thou, oh Lord, hast prepared.” The author of the book concerning the divine promises, falsely ascribed to St. Prosper, speaking of Tobias’s fish, says: “It is the type of that Fish which restored eyesight to

As often as the meal on the shore of the lake, combined with the bread-baskets comes before our eyes,—and it repeats itself in almost all chambers of the gallery visited by us,—we have the most speaking symbol of the Holy Communion, i. e. the heaven-blessed table, before us, on which Jesus Christ, the mystical “Fish” gives Himself as food to His disciples in the form of bread.

XIII.—*The Consecration.*

Let us now set foot in the second chapel. Here the symbolism of baptism and the entertainment of the seven men repeat themselves. There follows the figure of the paralytic, as symbol of the Sacrament of Penance, and then perhaps the most remarkable group of the whole cemeteral picture-world till now discovered. Close by the once martyr’s grave, i.e., the altar of the crypt, a picture represents the sacrifice-table, with one loaf and one fish in a kind of dish; over the latter a man, in a reddish ascetic’s pallium, holds the right hand stretched out,

blinded Paul, and on the shore satiated the disciples with Itself, and now offers Itself to the whole world as IXΩRC, (“Fish.”).... “We also,” is said lastly by the same author in another place, “are daily illuminated and fed by the holy Flesh of that Fish.”

whilst on the other side of the holy table a female figure, praying, has her arms raised. It is impossible not to recognize here a lively exposition of the holy change, i.e., Transubstantiation. The altar-table explains itself. The priest consecrates or blesses, as the ancient Church expressed herself, the bread lying upon the holy dish or paten, and makes it, i.e., changes it, into Christ the "Fish." Lastly, the woman represents the worshipping Christian Church (community*), perhaps also, which, besides, may be inferred therefrom, her prototype, Mary, who, as has been earlier detailed by us, is at the same time protectress and representative of the "virgin-motherly Church."

Let us contemplate one other painting of this remarkable chapel. Its subject is taken from the Old Testament, and if foreign to the fish-cyclus, is yet uncontestedly eucharistic, and, consequently a lucid confirmation of the preceding picture. It represents the typical sacrifice of Abraham. On the most ancient Christian monuments, pictures as well as sculptures, this scene occupies a precedence most worthy of

* Thus on an antique painting in Mosaic, in St. Sabina's at Rome, of the time of Celestine I. (423,) two female figures are, by the Latin inscription, expressly pictured as "the Church out of the heathen," and "the Church out of the circumcision."

note. Abraham mostly holds over Isaac, who, sometimes with his eyes bound, is kneeling before him or on the pile of wood, the sacrificing sword drawn, whilst a lamb or ram, indeed also an altar, is brought in at the side. It is a hint at the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass, and the bloody Sacrifice on the Cross; the former symbolized by Isaac, the latter by the lamb or the goat. But our representation has a peculiarity which distinguishes it above all known to us, and brings it into immediate relation to the table of sacrifice and the consecrating priest. As before, we see the pile of wood or altar, and on one side the ram. In order, however, to cause the idea of the bloody sacrifice to recede from, and in place thereof the unbloody eucharistic sacrifice to advance into, the foreground, Abraham and Isaac stand there, praying with out-stretched arms, after the fashion of the priest and the faithful at the holy Mysteries. Here-with we venture to conclude our researches in the Callistine gallery, as the eucharistic paintings of the two first chapels, the table of sacrifice excepted, repeat themselves almost regularly in the remainder, and remark once more, that their foundation dates from the commencement of the third, perhaps at the end of the second century. Proof is given by their topographical

connection with the burial-chapels of the Popes and of St. Cecilia; by the composition and technicality of the pictures, particularly the antique drapery, as, lastly, by the form and tenor of the mostly Grecian grave-inscriptions, with their nobly-written, briefly expressed and hearty invocations.

XIV.—*The Eucharistic Fish in Inscriptions.*

If we survey the eucharistic pictures brought before us, what depth of symbolism, what richness and variety of representation, what powerful testimony for Catholic worship and Catholic dogma, are not manifested in them! If the Catholic visitor to the catacombs receives impressions which can never more be effaced, and if he thereby becomes inexpressibly joyful in his faith, can the reader wonder?

Turn we for a moment from the picture-world to the epigraphical monuments, in order to search there also for traces of the eucharistic fish. In consideration of its importance, the conclusion must not be hazarded that the first Christians were generally, by preference, reminded of the eucharistic Christ by the symbol of the fish. For we possess two precious grave-inscriptions of the first century, which unambig-

uously mention the eucharistic fish. One, originating from the Catacombs, adorned with fish and anchor-cross, runs—

"Oh, Maritime revered! the sweetest Light thou didst not lose,
For in thy bosom lay concealed the '*Fish*,' the Lord of all.
Thy love divine has winged to God thy soul, in Him
transform'd!"

It is a particularly tender congratulation of a holy departed one, presumably a virgin. She is congratulated that with the earthly, not too has the unearthly, truly sweet light vanished from her, for dying she has indeed the source of eternal light, Jesus Christ, the undying IX^OYC "Fish," carried in her heart, who, in reward for her piety, will crown her with eternal life. All that the Fathers say about the mystical fish, as the Divine Dispenser of light, life, and nourishment, is here digested in few words, probably with reference to the Holy Viaticum.* The second inscription does not, indeed, originate from the Roman Catacombs, but on ac-

* Traces of a symbolical indication of the Viaticum often shew themselves. Thus, under the ancient epitaph of Titus Flavius Eutychius a loaf is represented, and on both sides of the same the mystical Fish. Another grave-stone has under the inscription a dove, which is on the point of devouring a fish. At all events in both cases the blessing of the Eucharist appears to be expressed.

count of the confirmation it renders our subject from a distance, already deserves our fullest attention. It is the highly significant inscription of Autun, which was dug out of the ancient Christian cemetery of St. Peter, in 1839. It consists of the following verses :

“ Oh race of Him the ‘ FISH,’ most blest ! In land
Of mortals taste the fountains never dry
Of waters all divine ! Refresh, dear friend,
Thy soul made pure in wisdom’s living spring !
Partake of food, than honey far more sweet,
In bliss consume it, holding in thine hand the ‘ FISH !’
Thus hot streams forth my prayer : ‘ My Lord and All,
Thou Light of men, oh be my guiding Star !
Attend to me, a sinner, hear my prayer !
Ashandëus, my father, lov’d of mine,
My mother too, most sweet, join’d with sleepers dear,
Reposing in the ‘ FISH,’ remember me ! ”

The inscription, in purport and form one of the most excellent and noble monuments of Christian antiquity, breathes entirely the age of the apostles’ disciples, Pothinus and Irenæus, and forms in a certain manner a compendium of the Christian faith, next to a glorification of the God-Man, whose hieroglyphic IXΘYC (Fish) commences the five first verses as an acrostic. It separates itself into two principal parts. The first contains an episcopal (or sacerdotal) summons to the neophytes. “ Ye,” thus admonishes the inspired poet, “ though mortal,

drawn out of the immortal spring of grace, are now a holy kindred of the ‘fish,’ i.e., of the Divine Man the Redeemer. Be diligent, then, in godliness and purity of heart. Avoid henceforth the death-drink of sin; refresh rather your dear souls with the inexhaustible waters, which dispense treasures of wisdom, and bubble over into eternal life. At the end, long for the sweetest miraculous food of the Saviour of the saints: eat, drink to your heart’s content, since ye hold in your hands the eucharistic Fish.” For the understanding of this passage we are reminded of the ancient Christian Rite of Communion. When the bishop, in the Holy Sacrifice, had arrived at the Communion, the congregation were accustomed to intone the 33rd Psalm, in which the verse, “Taste and see, how sweet the Lord is,” was referred to the Eucharist, and, indeed, occurs in our inscription (than honey far more sweet). Then the faithful, after a short mutual adoration,* approached to the altar or choir-grating, where, mostly standing, after the type of the Israelites at the pasch, sometimes also kneeling, they received the holy Food. Now, whilst the women used for this the “dominicale,” a linen cloth

* Compare the expression of St. Chrysostom:
“Adore the sacred Flesh and then enjoy It.”

spread over the hand, the men laid their bare hands,* which, on entering the church, they had washed for this object, crossways one over the other, in such a manner that the hollow of the right rested on the left. In the hand thus held they received from the Bishop the Food of angels, and conveyed It, with these words, “Corpus Christi!” or, “Corpus Domini!” to the mouth,† answering “Amen.” The second part of the inscription is of a private nature and again doubly divided. It contains first

* Still in the year 692, the Synod of Trullo ordained as follows: “We do not admit to communion those who make use of certain articles of gold or other stuff, in order to receive therewith, instead of with the hand, the divine gift. For they give lifeless material the preference to the Image of God.”

† Thus testifies St. Cyril of Jerusalem: “When thou approachest, stretch not thy flat hand out, nor spread the fingers one from the other, but place thy right, which is to receive the King, upon the left, as upon a throne, and receive in the hollow hand the Body of Christ, saying, ‘Amen.’ Hast thou touched with It thine eyes as for sanctification, then receive It, having good care that nothing thereof be lost....For tell me, if some one gave thee gold-dust, wouldst thou not hold it with the greatest care, and take heed that thou shouldst lose nothing, and thus suffer damage? How much more shouldst thou be on thy guard not to lose a crumb of that which, in value incomparably exceeds gold and precious stones! After the enjoyment of the Body of Christ, advance also to the Chalice of the Blood; not with out-stretched hands, but bowed as if in adoration and reverence, saying, ‘Amen.’....Then wait for the prayer, and thank God who has made thee worthy of such great mysteries. Keep these teachings inviolably, and preserve yourselves blameless.”

a fervent prayer of the author, Pectorius, to Christ the “ Fish :” “ May He, the royal Ruler and Saviour, the Light of the dying, be a star and guide to him in life and death.” Then his sight penetrates to heaven ; he sees father, mother, and other dear ones, gone home “ in the peace of the fish,” i.e., in the glory and joy of God’s Son, and earnestly and full of confidence he calls upon them to think of him at the throne of the Lamb. How many special points of the Catholic faith on a couple of fragments of stone ! Christ’s Godhead, redeeming power and glory ; the power of grace in baptism ; the necessity of sanctity, or the Catholic doctrine of justification ; the holy Eucharist ; the intercession of the saints, and their worship ;—all this testified by a priestly poet of the second or indeed first century !

XV.—*Other types of the Eucharist.*

If we have tarried perhaps longer than right by the fish-symbol, we must be excused on the score of the attractiveness and importance of the subject. We will now continue our eucharistic searches in the Catacombs, and first of all call to mind some further typical representations of the Old Testament. Besides the sacrifice of Isaac already cited, we often meet with the rain

of manna. We see the children of Israel busied in gathering up the "food of heaven" from the ground, or also in catching it in their laps. In the latter case, the manna is raining out of a cloud, which is typically brought into connection with some symbol of Christ; Moses (Peter) indeed is pointing significantly to the manna, or to the cloud of blessing. This eucharistic scene does not need interpretation. Another representation—it is found on many frescos and sarcophagi—renders the comfort-bringing character of the heavenly food prominent. It is the youthful prophet Daniel, the pattern for Christian confessors, cast before wild beasts. He is standing naked in the midst of the lions, and is being strengthened by Habacuc, whom the angel brings hither, with the already broken bread. The typical references are striking. Habacuc represents the servant of the Church. He is carried by an angel from the fields of Bethlehem to the lions' den, as angels also accompany the priest or deacon, when he betakes himself from the "House of the Bread," the tabernacle or *pastophorium* of the Catacombs, to the prison, in order to give to the Christians appointed for martyrdom the holy Food, the consolation of the Viaticum. We recollect to have seen a

representation, in which Daniel takes the angels' bread kneeling, as we receive the holy Communion adoring. To the old Testament ones manifold eucharistic scenes from the new Testament range themselves; and first the institution of the Lord's Supper. We see once the Saviour sitting with the twelve at table, on which, however, is neither bread nor cup; for the initiated the bare table was sufficiently characteristic. On another painting the mystery is veiled by a symbolism. The Saviour is holding in His left hand a roll, whilst His right rests in that of Peter. The roll of writing indicates the "new covenant" and its sacrifice; the presentation of the hand, the eucharistic union ("communio").* A scene of dissimilarly frequent occurrence is Christ's first miracle at the marriage feast in Cana. To the fathers it is the emblem of the consecration or changing of the eucharistic forms.† Resembling this

* Matthew xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24.

† "The change of the water into wine effected according to a new ordinance," says St. Maximus, "prefigured to us the Sacrament of the new chalice." And St. Cyril writes, "Christ has changed water into blood-like wine at Cana in Galilee; why should He not deserve belief when He changes wine into blood? And if He, who was invited to an earthly marriage feast, has worked this astounding miracle, shall we not confess, that He has all the more given His Body and His Blood to the children of the heavenly Bridegroom for their enjoyment?"

we see upon numerous pictures, glasses and sarcophagi, Christ figured as touching with the rod many stone jugs set before Him. Generally the multiplication of the loaves or the miraculous feeding of the multitude, at which Christ touches a number of bread-baskets, forms a suitable side-piece to this. Sometimes both scenes are so combined on one picture, that the Saviour has on one side the baskets, on the other the pitchers,—the most meaning explanation of the eucharistic elements, bread and wine, as also their change and distribution. The number of pitchers, although just as little constant as that of the baskets, amounts however mostly to seven, which, as the Gospel only mentions six of them, causes their mystical signification to be perceived. A gold enamelled drinking-cup, from the Catacomb of Callistus, with many ingenious scenes combined, may serve as example. First Tobias appears upon it with the fish; then Christ with the rod, and indeed three times repeated, whilst He touches, one after another, the seven pitchers, the paralytic, and lastly, the three children. The fish symbolizes Christ's mystical flesh; the pitchers, His Precious Blood; the healing of the sick, the elevation of the sinner to the life of grace; the saving of the children, the resurrec-

tion. The whole, consequently, typifies the promise of Christ: "He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," (John vi. 55), which other drinking-cups still more validly symbolize by Christ touching with the rod on the lower half of the glass, the seven pitchers, or baskets, and on the upper, by the raising up of Lazarus. We must yet call to mind one biblical emblem, the heavenly banquet. The belief in the Resurrection and the beatific life forms the ground-work of Christian symbolism on graves. Hence the ever-recurring emblems of Paradise; the representations of Noe, Jonas, Daniel, Elias, Lazarus, the Babylonian youths, and the Divine Shepherd, who says of Himself: "I am the resurrection and the life." This makes it explainable why the consoling allegory of the heavenly banquet, which combines those rudimentary thoughts, was by preference represented amongst the graves. Now, if the love-feasts (*agape*), which in their deeper signification were but shadowy images of that banquet, stood in relation to the Eucharist, to which they annexed themselves, this was still more decidedly the case as regards the heavenly meal, for which the eucharistic meal is the pledge, means, and

condition. Hence the prominent interchange of relations in the pictures. Thus, there are frequently upon the heavenly table (round which, besides men, also women, are ever lying), as upon the symbolical altar, bread and fish. Indeed, upon a very recently discovered classical and beautiful picture, exactly opposite the entrance-door in the apostolic Catacomb of Domitilla, we see actually the three-legged table of sacrifice, with three loaves and one fish, before two seated persons, manifestly godly deceased gone to heaven. Fish and bread symbolize here the Divine Food; the table of sacrifice, the altar, upon which it is prepared; the whole representation, the truth that the holy Eucharist prepares for the celestial meal of the beatific life, "He that eateth this Bread, shall live for ever." (John, vi. 59.)

XVI.

To the biblical types are added others, in part, still to this day in Christian art the ready symbols of the Eucharist. We mention in particular the grapes and ears of corn, as also those scenes undoubtedly alluding to the Eucharist, in which genii are keeping the vintage-

time, or reapers the harvest.* One symbol of the arcana we must remember more in detail, and in behalf thereof beg the reader to accompany us once more to the cemetery of Lucina, and in fact into that remarkable cubiculum which contains the representation of the swimming fish. Its paintings are all executed in the noblest Græco-Roman style of the first century. The roof particularly is adorned with charming garlands and arabesques, and exhibits in the keystone of the arch the Good Shepherd with a sheep on the shoulders and two others at the feet, and in its four corners, but alternately, the Good Shepherd and a praying figure of a woman. The former in a robe tied up short and the *syrinx* (shepherd's pipe) at the side, has the right hand lifted up as for instruction, whilst His left holds by the feet the lamb slung round His shoulders: the female figure is veiled, and is lifting up her bared arms out of the upper garment. The figures represent, as the reader already knows, the Saviour and Mary (by way of reference the Church).

* On one gem a vine branch is twining itself between two ears of corn round a tree, to materialize the idea that the Eucharist is a fruit of the Cross. The little birds feeding themselves on grapes were mentioned earlier; they represent the soul refreshed by the holy Food.

Now on both sides of the entrance, opposite the living fish, there are two representations. One exhibits in the middle, on a kind of altar, a vessel, which announces itself, by the shepherd's staff leaning on it, as a milk-pail; close thereby stand a sheep and a goat. What does this singular group signify? The Fathers give us the answer.* The vessel contains the "Divine Milk," i.e. the substance, flesh and blood of the Lamb, or the Divine Shepherd. Round the milk-vessel flocks, as before round the Shepherd, the herd, represented by the sheep and goat (the pure and the penitent soul). The altar, lastly, which occupies the Shepherd's place, symbolizes the mystical spot in which Christ's Flesh and Blood are offered, and as food and drink given to the faithful. Other pictures put this explanation beyond doubt.

* Already Clement of Alexandria calls the Body of Christ, or "the beautiful little Boy offered to the faithful,"—"Milk." St. Sophronius further reports that to Theodosius in a vision, "the vivifying bread and the cup of the mystical table full of Divine milk have been offered." St. Perpetua also received in an ecstasy the Body of Christ from the Divine Shepherd, under the symbol of curdled milk, because in the words of Clement of Alex., "cheese and milk offered as food and drink, form the same substance." Lastly, St. Ceno, addresses the neophytes in these words: "The lamb that has clothed your nakedness with its snow-white skin, pours also its blessed milk full of grace into your thirsty lips."

Thus in the Catacomb of Domitilla there is found many times the Divine Lamb with the shepherd's staff, on which is hung significantly the mystical milk-vessel. The cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellus gives a still more evident confirmation. Here we see in all four corners of an arch the milk-vessel on the back of the lamb ; and indeed, in evidence of its divine contents it is surrounded in a remarkable manner by a *nimbus* or glory—a representation manifestly quite similar to that of the fish, which is carrying on its back the mystical basket. In the lamb, as in the fish, is symbolized the invisible, veiled existence of the Eucharist ; in the milk-vessel and basket, its visible veil and form ; in both combined the entire unspeakable mystery of the altar. Let us yet contemplate the second picture at the entrance of the above-mentioned cubiculum. It forms apparently a companion to the first, to which it has a quite similar design. We again see in the middle the altar-like supporter, but bare, without milk-vessel and staff ; the sheep also have changed into many-coloured birds ; the unadorned ground into a meadow of flowers. Needs this contrast between the pictures but explanation ? They represent the twofold life of the faithful, the earthly, in which the "blessed milk" of the

Eucharist is given to them from the altar as refreshment and viaticum, and the beatific life in the celestial paradise, which no more needs the Sacrament. In connection with this symbolism the pictures of the roof-vault gain a special, deeply mystical meaning. They call to memory the sentence of the Fathers, that the love of the Divine Shepherd is greater than the love of the shepherd for the flock, or of the mother for her child, since it has never been heard of that shepherds nourish their flocks, or mothers their children, with their own blood.

XVII.

Let us make a short resumé. The picture-cyclus of the Catacombs unveils the sacramental presence of Christ by change of substance; exhibits the material of bread and wine; indicates the rite of consecration and the priestly character of the celebrant; causes the adoration of our Lord's body and its lasting presence to be perceived. Countless places of sacrifice announce that more than one and a half thousand years ago holy Mass was celebrated in those vaults, to the honour of the Most High and the glory of His Saints !

Mysterious symbols, and unambiguous voices out of the graves, proclaim the condescension of a God, who offers His own substance, His blessed Flesh and Blood as food for the soul, viaticum, and pledge of heaven.* Lastly, the majesty of Catholic dogma alone explains the anxious care with which the primitive Church withdrew from the eyes of unbelievers that sweet mystery, in order to guard it from misrepresentation and desecration, and concealed it in the veil of symbols and arcana-formulæ. For, what misrepresentation would the modern teaching have had to fear, viz., that "the Lord's Supper is bread and wine, taken in remembrance of Christ"? Would it indeed have been capable of causing Christians to incur the reproach of child-murder and thyestical repasts, and also under the most horrible torments to keep silence respecting this most holy secret?

* That many monuments described by us, testify at the same time to the Catholic distribution of the Eucharist, has certainly not escaped the reader. The recognised custom, in times of persecution, of giving the Eucharistic Bread (but never the Precious Blood) to take home, seems by the discovery of many cases (pyxis), or little turrets, some of which are indeed provided with a lamp (to our "Eternal Sight"), to receive interesting confirmation.

XVIII.—*God's House.*

The Eucharistic mystery is the heart of Christian worship, the place of worship; consequently its work-place and throne. The contemplation of this last, i.e. the Christian House of God, will therefore not unsuitably conclude our aphoristical researches.* The Catholic Temple possesses in the Catacombs its type, its solid fundamental form. As the bud unfolds itself to a blossom, so the subterraneous Catacomb crypt has developed itself to the glorious basilica. Both vault themselves over martyrs' tombs, and bodies of Saints. The plain arch of the *arcosolium* has grown to the triumphal arch and the *apsis*; the modest *cathedra* and bench for priests to the *presbyterium*; the chambers to mighty pillared naves: the *lumi-*

* We must withhold God's acre from our investigation. But two inscriptions may find room here, which are of consequence for the question, just now vehement, of the exclusiveness of Catholic church-yards. One, borrowed from the Catacomb of Domitilla, has its origin in the apostolic age, and says, "M. Antoninus Restitutus made this tomb for himself and those members of his family, who believe in the Lord." **SIBI ET SVIS FIDENTIBVS IN DOMINO.** The other a certain Valerius erected, and indeed for himself and "the descendants, who belong to my religion." **POSTERISQVE (qui) AD RELIGIONEM (sint) PERTINENTES MEAM.**

nare to majestic cupolas and towers. To this day the altar conceals relics of saints,* overhung by baldachino and tabernacle glittering with gold, as formerly by the *ciborium*,† from which the golden “dove” or the silver “turret” was suspended. Church vestments, holy vessels, and altar ornaments,‡ are to-day no other than in the days of the infant Church, objects of the care and love of Christians. Lastly, in particular the use of images in the oldest apostolic

* The liturgical language now still calls the relic-case in the altar-stone “grave,” *sepulchrum*, as the rite of the consecration of altars has a similarity to that of the burial of martyrs.

† It may not be amiss to give the following information from Dr. Rock’s “Hierurgia:”—

The Canopy, or Ciborium as it was called (*Kibōsos*) from its supposed resemblance to the bowl of a cup reversed, was in ancient Churches supported by four pillars, and overshadowed the altar, as does now in many churches the “baldachino.” What we in England call the “tabernacle,” is termed in Italy “ciborio,” and what we designate as the “ciborium,” viz. the cup in which the B. Sacrament is preserved, is elsewhere named “pyxis,” or pyx.—(Trans.)

‡ As Church vestments, the monuments let the bordered pallium be recognised, the *tunica*, or alb, the stole and episcopal head-bandage, the lappets of which have been retained on the mitre. Of ancient Christian altar vessels there have been found glass cups, ornamented with the mystical fish, *ampullæ* (flagons), fragments of large glass patens with biblical scenes in gold enamel, a case for the sacrificial wine, likewise with the fish and the inscription, “live in God,” &c. The old Christian custom of adorning altar-tombs with flowers, lights and decorations, needs no particular notice.

time was holy. This fact, confirmed by the Catacombs, is in the highest degree astounding. The primitive Church goes forth out of the synagogue, which was originally averse to images, and wrestles with paganism, that is misusing the art most horribly. In spite of this she unfolds even in her first beginning a rich life of art. In view of the apostolic Catacombs of Priscilla, Domitilla and Lucina, with their holy picture-decoration, the assertion that the use of images has crept in gradually, as it were under the hand and against the practice of the infant Church, must become dumb, and one conceives it when puritanical iconoclasts, who have thoroughly emptied and white-washed their meeting-houses as well as their hearts, do not feel themselves at home in the Catacomb-crypts, so full of art and life.

XIX.—*The Crucifix.*

The above calls forth an interesting question. Has the pre-eminent (liturgically considered, quite indispensable) image in the Catholic House of God, the image which expresses to the Christian's heart the epitome of all his faith, hope and charity,—has the crucifix found no representation in the primitive Church? From

the mouth of the Fathers we know that the first Christians signed themselves with the cross* on forehead and breast at every step. Will not art then have recognised the Crucified? We seek of course in vain in the Catacombs for the unveiled historical representation of the sacrifice on Golgotha. It would without hesitation have contradicted the laws of the Arcana and exposed the mystery to the profanation of Pagans.† But whoever penetrates the typical and symbolical veil is astounded at the fulness and multiplicity of the paintings by which the first Christians placed before their eyes the love of the Crucified. Sometimes it appears in Abel; then in Isaac, and again in the brazen

* "We may go on a journey, go out or come in, clothe ourselves or put on our shoes, wash or betake ourselves to table, light a candle, lie down or seat ourselves, in a word, whatever we may do, we imprint the sign of the cross on our forehead." (Tertullian.)

† The Christians bore also the nickname of "Crucicola," "Cross-adorers," and more recent excavations in the palace of the Cæsars on the Palatine, have led to the discovery of a school (*pædagogium*) for the imperial pages, on the walls of which are many scribblings of the second and third century; amongst them also witnesses to the heathen arrogance towards Christians, and to the hate against the cross. Thus we read not only behind the name "Libanus" the addition by another hand, "Episcopus," (a mockery made on a Christian fellow-pupil by a heathen page,) but we also see another Christian youth, "Alexamenus," represented adoring the image of one crucified, to whom, in scorn, the head of an ass has been given.

serpent; in dying Isaias, or in the representation of the fall into sin. If Isaac is carrying on his shoulder the wood for the sacrifice, then he represents Jesus laden with the cross, tottering up the hill of Calvary; if he is kneeling on the wood, waiting for the blow, then he symbolizes the Crucifixion itself, at which the First-born of Mary (the ram or lamb) dies, but the Only-begotten of God (Isaac) does not die. When we see on other pictures the sufferer Job, or the mighty bunch of grapes of the Israelitish spies, carried by two men on a wooden pole, there before us stands the suffering, here the dying Saviour pressed as grapes on the cross. If the Good Shepherd is holding the lamb over the shoulders with His arms stretched in such a way as to form together the figure of the cross, then here too the death of the Divine Shepherd is symbolized, who "gives His life for His sheep," and who leaves His flock of angels, in order in the earthly wilderness to seek the lost sheep of mankind, and dying on the Cross, to carry it back to the heavenly fold.* Yet more frequently than in

* The lamb (sheep) signifies also in this symbolism human nature assumed and sacrificed by the Eternal Word. "For the Good Shepherd," says S. Peter Chrysologus, "came into the world to seek the sheep; He found it in the womb of the Virgin;

types does the image of the Crucified meet us in symbols. We are already intimate with the fish of Tobias, which dead gives light and nourishment. Now, as in the fifth and sixth centuries actual crosses, often as reliquaries, were worn on the breast, so the Christians of the age of persecution carried, as token of their belief in the Crucified, little fish round the neck, of which a great number made of crystal, mother-of-pearl, enamel, ivory, and other materials, have been discovered in the Catacombs. The anchor-cross is also not unknown to us. If the fish is winding itself round the same, it signifies Christ's Body, which dying, writhes Itself on the cross; but if the fish is fastened on the anchor-cross, or carries the same on its back, then there the nailing to the cross, here the carriage of the cross, is symbolized. A further symbol of the cross, is the palm-tree, under the crown of which sometimes sheep are pasturing, sometimes the Lamb is standing with the milk-vessel, surrounded by a *nimbus*, in token that the cross shelters the faithful, nourishes and gives them to drink from

made it visible in the flesh of His birth; laid it upon the shoulders of His Passion, and lifted it up on the cross: exulting with repeated joy, He at last bore it, at the Ascension, to the fold of the heavenly habitation."

the eucharistic Blood. The cither or lyre also becomes a symbol thereof, since it has a double cross. If, therefore, as is the case in many pictures of the Catacombs, the Sibylline poet Orpheus, with his playing on the cither, allures to himself beasts of the forest, trees and rocks, so is this the Divine Lover of souls, who on the cither of the cross intones that "new canticle," whose sweet melody conquers the ferocity and hardness of hearts, according to the promise : "When I shall be lifted up, I will draw all things to Me."

XX.—*The Monogram.*

Two veiled representations of the Cross yet remain. One, half picture, half letter, is the celebrated monogram. In its most ancient form it appears as T, or as a trident, and whilst upon the former rests many times the dove, the symbol of the Holy Ghost and the Christian soul, on the trident, repeatedly the fish is bound ; or it adorns, instead of the Cross, the mast of the mystical Ship. To these most ancient arcana-tokens is added quite early the letter X, which represents a displaced cross, and at the same time the Greek initial letter of Christ, until about the year 250 the letter I

(Jesus), and rather later, in lieu thereof, the letter P (Christus, or ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ) inserts itself. Thus then is formed the monogram  properly so-called, which signifies as much as "Jesus Christ and the Cross," or, "Jesus Christ on the Cross," and, after it had appeared to Constantine in the sky, through the whole of the fourth century shines on all imperial and church-banners, on temples, altars, and thousands of grave-stones, on the coins of the Emperors, as on the helmets and shields of warriors.* The other representation of the cross, is, without doubt, the most illustrious of the number, as also the most beautiful and ingenious according to the symbolism. Hundreds of pictures, namely, grave-stones, enamels, and sculptures, show us the blessed in heaven, and the faithful upon earth, praying with arms stretched out in the form of the cross. "We have a precept," writes St. Maximus, "to pray

* With the victory of Christianity, the symbolical cloak loses its importance. Already about 350, an oblique line is added in the monogram, which, with the perpendicular stroke of the P, lets the cross be already recognised, till the latter, about 410, emerges entirely from the veil. In the meanwhile, the image of the Crucified does not also immediately appear. First, as symbols of the graces of the Redemption, flowers, wreaths, and precious stones compensate for this; then the lamb resting or standing at the foot of the cross, till at length in the 6th century, the crucifix-image shows itself unveiled and complete.

with elevated hands, in order, even by the corporal attitude to confess the Passion of our Lord." And St. Peter Chrysologus remarks, "Does not he, who stretches out his hands, already pray by his attitude?" i. e. "through Jesus Christ," or, "in the name of the Crucified"? When, therefore, (as still to-day, the priest at the altar, the friar in his cell, and the Catholic people on chosen miraculous places,) in the first centuries, clergy and faithful universally prayed with arms spread out, and sometimes even martyrs suffered and died in this attitude, they thus confessed the Redeemer extended on the Cross, and offered to our heavenly Father His merits.

XXI.—*Conclusion.*

We have endeavoured, as far as the limits of two pamphlets, and the incompleteness of material hitherto published have allowed, to give the reader an approximate idea of the importance of the Catacombs. Before our searching gaze the dark tombs have become light, the dead masses of stone animate, giving willing and ready answer. With awe, as is seemly in a holy place, we have held, as it were, a judgment of the dead. We have summoned graves, monu-

ments, and art-pictures of the Christian era as a testimony for the depository of our faith; have collected their depositions, examined and weighed them, and lo! they amount to the unanimous confession: "We believe in the Roman Catholic Church!" As the Saviour ascending to heaven left behind the print of His Divine Foot in the rock, so has the Apostolic Church, departing, left behind on the rocky stones of the Catacombs holy traces of her belief and course of life, which the latest generations still venerate and bless. In her truth shines in a light of such incontestableness, that error will of necessity be forced to make its reckoning with her. Already in view of these archæological testimonies, Catholic doctrines, for centuries reviled, can no longer be denoted as later inventions and human additions, nor "pure primitive Christianity" be further sought outside the Catholic Church. An old Christian gem exhibits a ship borne by a mighty fish; at the side, on the storm-raging sea, Peter is held by the Saviour over the billows, whilst on the mast, as at the helm of the ship, sits unconcerned a dove. A striking picture of the Church in stormy days! Whether the billows surge, whether the waves threaten to bury the little ship,—the mystical Fish, Jesus Christ, bears

her with God's strength through the rebellious element, and supports the successor of Peter, so that the waters smooth themselves as a path under his feet; and on the mast, at the helm of the ship, i.e. on the western tower of the Roman Vatican, there sits quiet and directing, ever since it fluttered down from God's Bosom on the day of Pentecost, the Heavenly Dove, sharpening the eye and nerves of the hand of the Church's Pontifical Prince. God grant (this wish has often obtruded itself on us during the present work) that also those standing afar from the Church, may in these Catacombs become sensible of the cooings of this Heavenly Dove, to the peace of their souls. If out of the gloom of the subterranean Catacombs of Graves and the purple light of martyrs' blood, once already the sun of Christianity has risen in radiance over the Roman world-empire, can not the re-opened martyrs' tombs once more stream forth light, and with silent conquering power contribute to the victory of truth and of the Cross?

THE END.

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